NATION

28 held in Bihar for attempting irregularities during NEET

≫ Page: 4 ≪

BUSINESS

Reliance shares move 1 pc higher as Jio files IPO

≫ Page: 7 ≪

SPORTS

Salah scores, Egypt downs NZ 3-1 for first victory

≫ Page: 8 ≪

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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in | 23 JUNE 2026 | TUESDAY | BENGALURU | 7 MUHARRAM 1448 H | Vol 5 | Issue No 162 | Pages: 8

Social media a/c admin booked for post against DKS

BENGALURU, 22 JUNE

A case has been registered against social media account administrators for allegedly circulating false and derogatory content against Karnataka Chief Minister D K Shivakumar. Based on a complaint by a law practitioner, Sadashivanagar police registered the FIR on 20 June under section 192 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita for wantonly provoking with intent to cause riots. The complaint stated that the accounts "Kumaraswamy for CM" and "Janata Dal (Secular)" had posted a video on 17 June titled "Old habits start again – a trait that never changes even if burnt". The video contained false accusations and defamatory content aimed at misleading the public, generating hatred, and damaging the CM's reputation. An investigation is ongoing. *–PTI*

Four fertiliser ships clear Hormuz; head to India

NEW DELHI, 22 JUNE

Four cargo ships carrying urea, DAP, and sulphur successfully crossed the Strait of Hormuz last week amid ongoing tensions in West Asia. They are now headed to ports in Krishnapatnam, Kakinada, Paradeep, and Mundra, where the cargo will be offloaded to bolster fertiliser stocks ahead of the Kharif season. The Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers said domestic production has reached 133.12 lakh tonnes, with imports at 43.69 lakh tonnes since 1 March. India has secured 17.70 lakh tonnes of urea through a global tender, bringing total supplies of urea and P&K fertilisers to over 90 lakh tonnes. Cumulative stocks are at 196.08 lakh tonnes, with sales since March reaching 153.4 lakh tonnes. *–PTI*

UK PM STARMER
QUITS
"The question my party is asking now is whether I am best placed to lead us into the next general election"
—Keir Starmer, UK PM

Starmer loses Labour's love post Epstein row

LONDON, 22 JUNE

Keir Starmer on Monday announced his resignation as British Prime Minister and Labour Party leader, saying he would remain as caretaker PM until a successor is chosen in the coming weeks.

"The question my party is asking now is whether I am best placed to lead us into the next general election," an emotional Starmer said outside 10 Downing Street. "I have heard the answer of my parliamentary party to that question and I accept that answer with good grace."

The 63-year-old said he had informed King Charles III of his decision and would ask Labour's National Executive Committee to begin the leadership election process. Nominations will open on July 9 and a new leader is expected to be in place before Parliament returns in September.

Pressure on Starmer had mounted for months amid poor approval ratings for both him and Labour. His position weakened further after US Department of Justice documents revived controversy over his appointment of Peter Mandelson as ambassador to the US despite the latter's links to convicted paedophile Jeffrey Epstein.

A damaging by-election defeat in February, after Starmer blocked Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham from contesting, was followed by poor local and national election results in May. Health Secretary Wes Streeting and several junior ministers resigned, while Defence Secretary John Healey stepped down earlier this month amid disputes over defence spending.

Burnham, who returned to the House of Commons after winning a by-election last week, is regarded as the frontrunner to replace Starmer and has confirmed he will contest the leadership. Former health secretary Wes Streeting is also expected to run. Starmer, who led Labour to a landslide victory in the 2024 general election, defended his record, citing economic growth, rising wages and infrastructure investment. Choking back tears, he said he now looked forward to spending more time with his wife, Vic, and their children.

His resignation means Britain will search for its seventh prime minister in a decade. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3, 5 & 6

NTA DISMISSES VIDEO OF NEET LEAK AS 'FAKE'

NEW DELHI, 22 JUNE

The National Testing Agency (NTA) has described as fake a video (**in pic**) being circulated on social media claiming that the NEET-UG 2026 paper was leaked.

In a statement on X, the NTA said the exam was conducted successfully under comprehensive security.

"NTA's attention has been drawn to a fabricated video being circulated on social media regarding NEET (UG) 2026. The video is fake and the claims it makes are false," the statement said.

The NTS said manufacturing and deliberately circulating such misinformation to alarm students was a "serious offence."

"NTA, with the support of I4C and law-enforcement agencies, is taking action against those responsible for creating this content," the agency said.

The NTA appealed to students, parents and the public to rely only on the official website and the agency's verified social media handles for information.

Around 20 lakh medical hopefuls took a second shot at the NEET re-exam on Sunday after the original test was cancelled due to leaks.

Abhishek Singh, the Director General of NTA, which has been receiving flak following the paper leak, said a "whole-of-government" approach helped it to conduct the mammoth exercise in record time. *— PTI*

Fire personnel douse a fire that broke out at a commercial building in Aliganj, Lucknow on Monday *–PTI*

15 including students dead in Lucknow building fire

LUCKNOW, 22 JUNE

At least 15 people, including students, were killed and seven injured after a major fire engulfed a three-storey commercial building in a posh Lucknow neighbourhood on Monday afternoon, officials said.

Most of the victims were trapped on the second floor, where students were attending classes at an animation centre. Rescue teams drilled two large holes from the terrace of an adjoining building to gain access as the affected structure had no fire exit.

The building is located in the upscale Aliganj area, dotted with commercial establishments, coaching centres and cafes, and is close to the Purania market.

Eyewitnesses said several people jumped from the building, which was completely gutted in the blaze. The structure also housed a pet clinic, from where several animals were rescued.

PTI witnessed people being brought out during the rescue operation, with some bodies carried in body bags and others wrapped in blankets. Visuals showed a few people rappelling down wires to escape.

Fourteen fire tenders, including a hydraulic platform vehicle, were deployed to douse the flames. The cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained.

Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak said a high-level inquiry had been ordered. "The fire broke out suddenly. It was an animation centre. The children ran towards the back side when the fire broke out, but they couldn't survive," he said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed condolences and announced an ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund to the next of kin of each deceased and Rs 50,000 for the injured.

Locals said smoke was billowing from the building when they arrived and that firefighters took some time to reach the spot.

Another resident said seven or eight students jumped to save themselves.

Outside, anguished parents and relatives pleaded with officials to let them enter the building as rescue operations continued. Residents also helped firefighters with water and rescued cats from the pet clinic. *—PTI*

MAN DIES OF H1N1 IN K'TAKA

MANGALURU, 22 JUNE

A 41-year-old farm labourer from Yallapur taluk in Uttara Kannada district died of H1N1 swine flu at a private hospital in Mangaluru on 21 June.

The man developed a fever around June 10 and initially sought treatment at a local clinic. As his condition worsened, he was admitted to a hospital in Sirsi on 17 June. After developing severe breathing difficulties, he was shifted to a specialised private hospital in Mangaluru, where laboratory tests confirmed H1N1 infection.

Following the confirmation, health authorities launched containment measures.

Yallapur Taluk Health Officer Dr Narendra Pawar said close family members and other contacts were under medical observation and treatment as a precaution.

Health teams have advised the family and local residents to strictly follow preventive measures, including wearing masks and maintaining hand hygiene. *—PTI*

US waives off Iran oil sanctions for 60 days

LONDON, 22 JUNE

The US Treasury Department on Monday issued a 60-day licence authorising the production, delivery and sale of Iranian oil, temporarily waiving sanctions as Washington and Tehran pursue a final peace agreement as the two nations held talks in Switzerland.

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said the decision followed "ongoing productive talks in Switzerland", adding that Iran had committed to ensuring free transit through the Strait of Hormuz and allowing inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) into the country.

The move came as mediators Pakistan and Qatar announced that the US and Iran had agreed on a roadmap to reach a final deal within 60 days.

US Vice-President JD Vance said talks with senior Iranian officials had laid "a good foundation for a successful final wider settlement.

Vance also floated the possibility of unfreezing Iranian assets to allow purchases of American soy, corn and wheat under Qatari oversight. Iran has not commented on the proposal. The Treasury licence, valid until August 21, would also permit imports of Iranian oil into the US for the first time in decades. The talks were briefly overshadowed on Sunday when Iran's delegation walked out of the Swiss venue after President Donald Trump issued sharp warnings, threatening action against Iran if Hezbollah attacks continued or maritime shipping was disrupted. Iranian officials also skipped a planned joint photo opportunity with Vance and the mediators. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 6

Pak PM Shehbaz Sharif appears confused as Iran walks out of talks with US following a threatening post by US Prez Donald Trump *–SCRE*

INDIANS AMONG 13 KILLED IN QATAR GAS PLANT EXPLOSION

DUBAI, 22 JUNE

At least 13 people, including Indians, were killed in an explosion at a factory in the Ras Laffan Industrial City in Qatar, the Gulf country's energy minister Saad bin Shreida Al-Kaabi said on Monday.

Al-Kaabi, who is also the CEO of QatarEnergy, said 66 people were injured in the fire caused by the explosion at the Barzan local gas supply facility in Ras Laffan Industrial City on Sunday evening, Doha News reported.

During a press briefing on Monday, Al-Kaabi confirmed that 13 people of Indian and Pakistani origins have died in the incident. He, however, did not provide the exact number of Indian victims.

The injured were from several countries, including India, Qatar, Tanzania, Pakistan, Guinea, Nepal, Bangladesh, Kenya and Nigeria, local media reported.

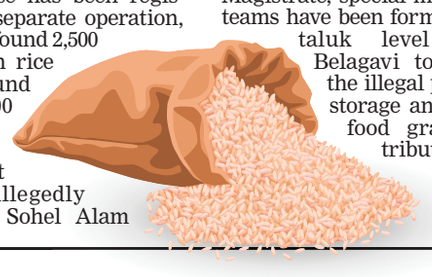
Earlier, the Embassy of India expressed "deep concern at the unfortunate incident", in which several people got injured, and some are missing. *—PTI*

7.7T of illegally stored PDS rice seized in Belagavi

BELAGAVI, 22 JUNE

The Food and Civil Supplies Department on Monday seized more than 7.7 tonnes of rice in separate raids conducted in Nippani town in Belagavi district.

Officials seized 5,200 kg of ration rice valued at approximately Rs 1.76 lakh allegedly stored illegally in Nippani Nagar by a man called Sandeep Balasaheb Ghangali, against whom a case has been registered. In a separate operation, authorities found 2,500 kg of ration rice worth around Rs 85,000 stored in a shed at Hidayat Nagar, allegedly stocked by Sohel Alam Dhalayita, a native of Kolhapur in Maharashtra. A case has also been registered against him. The department warned that stringent legal action would be initiated against brokers, middlemen and smugglers who exploit ration card beneficiaries by purchasing subsidised food grains from them at low prices and diverting it for illegal traders – a punishable offence. Acting on the directions of the District Magistrate, special monitoring teams have been formed at the taluk level across Belagavi to prevent the illegal purchase, storage and sale of food grains distributed PDS. *— Salar News*



REFRESHER COURSES MUST

Union flags risks as 6-month off-duty loco pilots drive trains

NEW DELHI, 22 JUNE

The All India Railwaymen's Federation (AIRF) has raised safety concerns over a recent amendment by the Northern Railway allowing loco pilots who have not performed driving duties for six months to operate trains without undergoing refresher training.

Under the revised norms, Chief Loco Inspectors (CLIs) can issue competency certificates to such loco pilots, enabling them to resume regular train operations without attending refresher courses.

AIRF general secretary Shiv Gopal Mishra, in a letter to the chairman and CEO of the Railway Board, warned that the move could pose safety risks.

"Since the amendment does not provide for any comprehensive refresher course for those loco running staff who have not worked on any locomotive for six months, it is likely to pose a potential risk to safety," he said.

Mishra demanded the immediate withdrawal of the amendment, introduced on 18 February.

He also flagged shortcomings in the Refresher Training Modules issued by the Railway Board on 19 November, 2024, saying they provide only theoretical instruction and lack practical training. *— PTI*

Kunal Shah named WhatsApp CEO as Meta invests $1B in Cred

NEW DELHI, 22 JUNE

Meta will invest Rs 8,550 crore in fintech platform CRED as part of its Series H funding round, while CRED founder Kunal Shah will step down as Chief Executive Officer to lead WhatsApp globally.

The investment values Bengaluru-based CRED at Rs 43,239 crore (USD 4.5 billion) post-money. Meta will join CRED as a minority investor and will not have access to customer data, the company said. *—PTI*

Udupi court receives bomb threat

UDUPI, 22 JUNE

A bomb threat email prompted a major security alert at the Udupi District Court complex on Monday morning, leading to an intensive search operation, police said.

Following the receipt of the threat, Udupi City Police, along with a dog squad and Bomb Detection and Disposal Squad, immediately conducted a thorough search of the entire building. All sections were systematically inspected, and no suspicious object was found, with police describing it as a hoax.

Security has been heightened across the complex with additional personnel deployed as a precaution. Police are investigating the source of the email and assessing its credibility. —*PTI*

3 of a family die by suicide in Mysuru

MYSURU, 22 JUNE

A couple along with their daughter died by suicide after a youth from their village shared photos and messages of the girl on social media. The messages went viral, which distressed the family members. | The incident was reported from Kempayyanahundi village in T Narasipura taluk. According to the police, the deceased have been identified as Shivannna, 50, his wife Nagarathna, 45, and daughter Rakshitha, 21. They hanged themselves at their residence after leaving a suicide note accusing a man called Ullasgowda of being responsible for them taking the extreme step. Allegedly, Ullasgowda harassed Rakshitha and the family after her marriage with another youth, and circulated her photos on social media. Police have registered a case and an investigation is underway. —*SALAR NEWS*

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, or SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support.

KSIIDC pays Rs 143 crore dividend to govt

BENGALURU, 22 JUNE

Karnataka State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation (KSIIDC) on Monday handed over a dividend cheque of Rs 143.12 crore to Chief Minister DK Shivakumar from its profits for the financial year 2024-25. Large and Medium Industries and Infrastructure Development Minister MB Patil presented the cheque at Vidhana Soudha. KSIIDC also contributed Rs 3 crore to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund. Patil said the corporation posted a net profit of Rs 188.41 crore in 2024-25 after tax and earned an additional Rs 19.34 crore as special dividend income in 2025-26. In line with government norms, 30 per cent of the dividend amount was transferred to the State Government. He said the corporation earned income from investments in KAMCO, KATCO, MSIL and HGML and noted that public sector enterprises had maintained record profitability over the past three years. —*SALAR NEWS*

90% farmers against Bidadi township: HDK

DKS calls HDK for talks at Vidhana Soudha after being challenged for open debate

BENGALURU, 22 JUNE

JD(S) leader and Union Minister **HD Kumaraswamy** on Monday alleged that 80-90 per cent of local farmers oppose the proposed Greater Bengaluru Integrated Township (GBIT) project near Bidadi and that over 4,000 objections had been filed after the preliminary notification.

Claiming the government had failed to address farmers' concerns, Kumaraswamy challenged Chief Minister DK Shivakumar to an open debate at Byramangala on the project and the related land acquisition.

Shivakumar has invited the former Chief Minister to his office at Vidhana Soudha on 26 June to discuss the issue. However, Kumaraswamy, citing prior commitments, sought to reschedule the meeting to 27 June and hold it in Bidadi or Byramangala so that affected farmers and villagers could participate.

"A challenge was thrown for a debate. Let us go to Byramangala and see whether farmers have really consented to part with their land," Kumaraswamy told reporters, adding that women and elderly residents had been protesting there for over 450 days.

Shivakumar declined to engage directly, saying JD(S) MLAs could raise the issue during the upcoming Assembly session and the government would respond. Despite opposition from sections of farmers and villagers, the government recently issued a final notification acquiring 499 acres across three villages in Ramanagara and Harohalli taluks for the township, billed as India's first AI-powered integrated township.

The project is expected to span 7,481 acres across nine villages.

Kumaraswamy alleged project-related activities were being run from a rented house in Bengaluru's Nagarbhavi and involved "mafia elements".

Accusing the government of acting as a broker for real-estate interests, he said Congress leaders, including Shivakumar, Siddaramaiah and Mallikarjun Kharge, had earlier opposed the project.

He also alleged that cabinet expansion in Congress involved "government quota" and "management quota" berths amounting to a "payment quota" system. —*PTI*

CONG RALLY BLAMED

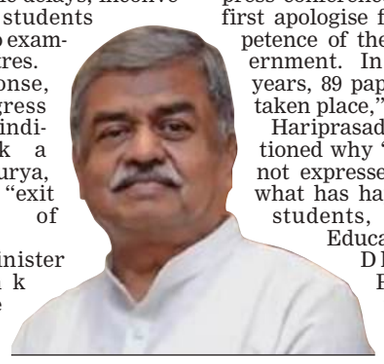
Hariprasad regrets traffic delays faced by NEET students

BENGALURU, 22 JUNE

Karnataka Congress President **BK Hariprasad** on Monday expressed regret over traffic disruptions that affected some NEET-UG re-exam students in Bengaluru.

He countered BJPs criticism by pinning responsibility on the Centre for the paper leaks.

Congress held a mega rally at Palace Grounds on Sunday, coinciding with the re-exam. BJP MP Tejasvi Surya and Leader of Opposition R Ashoka alleged the event caused traffic delays, inconveniencing students travelling to examination centres.



In response, the Congress President indirectly took a swipe at Surya, calling the "exit master" of Bengaluru.

Home Minister Priyank Kharge added that the programme had been scheduled on Sunday to avoid disruptions and that all necessary precautions had been taken.

Hariprasad said media reports indicated only three students faced difficulties in Bengaluru, and pointed out that thousands had reportedly missed the examination in Kalaburagi and in Mangaluru — where no Congress programmes were being held.

"Students have also missed examinations in Maharashtra, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. If BJP MPs want to hold a press conference, they should first apologise for the incompetence of the Central government. In the last 10 years, 89 paper leaks have taken place," he asserted.

Hariprasad further questioned why "PM Modi has not expressed regret over what has happened to the students, and the Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has not resigned." —*PTI*

Woman says cop son-in-law killed daughter

VIJAYANAGAR, 22 JUNE

A 25-year-old newlywed woman was allegedly murdered by her police constable husband and his family for dowry at Guledahatti Tanda in Davangere's Harapanahalli taluk, with the victim's mother claiming she witnessed the killing.

Kaushalya, wife of Shivakumar Nayak and a native of Yeraballi Tanda, was found hanging at her home.

Her mother, Jayabai, filed a complaint at the Arasikere Police Station on Saturday alleging that Shivakumar, a constable attached to the Konanakunte Police, and his brother Sachin, father Sakrya Nayak and mother Sharadabai, assaulted and hanged her daughter to death. All the accused are absconding.

"Alarmed by my daughter's cries, I rushed to Guledahatti Tanda. I personally witnessed Shivakumar and his family killing my daughter," she alleged.

Deputy Superintendent Santosh Chouhan told Salar News that police were verifying the authenticity of the allegations and that no arrests had been made so far.

Police have registered a case under Sections 352, 80, 85, 103(1), 351(2) and 3(5) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and Sections 3 and 4 of the Dowry Prohibition Act.

Arasikere Police Sub-Inspector Vijayakrishna told Salar News that Kaushalya and Shivakumar married on 15 March this year and her family allegedly gave 13 tolas of gold and Rs 3.5 lakh as dowry. Jayabai alleged her daughter was later harassed for additional dowry and over suspicions regarding her character. —*Salar News*

BJP's D'sthala vow against cross-voting draws flak

BENGALURU, 22 JUNE

Senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader R Ashoka on Monday said that he and Karnataka BJP president BY Vijayendra would meet party national president Nitin Nabin in New Delhi on 23 June to brief him on the alleged cross-voting by Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) during last week's MLC elections in the state.

"A committee has been constituted to investigate the matter, and it is expected to submit its report by today or tomorrow. We will forward the report to the central leadership," he said.

Asked whether the party had identified those responsible for the cross-voting, Ashoka said there were suspicions but no confirmation.

"Do you think those who cross-voted did so for free? ... money is involved. It is nothing but horse-trading," he said.

He added that those involved in the cross-voting would not be spared and would face disciplinary action.

Ashoka alleged that the Congress had induced MLAs to cross-vote. He claimed that the Congress would face political consequences.

With Vijayendra proposing a BJP legislature party meeting in the temple town of Dharmasthala—indicating that MLAs might take a 'pramaana' (oath) before Lord Manjunatha to reveal the truth about the cross-voting—Ashoka said several senior party leaders had advised against using a holy place for political purposes. —*PTI*

Growers want MSP of Rs 8,000-10,000 per tonne, as Totapuri mangoes fetch barely Rs 5 per kg —*SALAR*

MANGO FARMERS' BANDH PARTIALLY HITS KOLAR

KOLAR, 22 JUNE

A district-wide bandh called by mango growers and farmers' organisations partially disrupted normal life in parts of Kolar and Srinivaspur taluks on Monday, with protesters demanding a minimum support price (MSP) for mangoes and intervention by the State and Central Governments.

Growers are seeking an MSP of Rs 8,000-10,000 per tonne, arguing that Totapuri mangoes are fetching barely Rs 5 per kg against a production cost of around Rs 8.55 per kg. They pointed to neighbouring Andhra Pradesh, where a support price of Rs 4 per kg has been announced.

District Mango Growers' Association president Nelatur Chinnappa Reddy said farmers were reeling under losses caused by poor prices and rising cultivation costs. Kolar, one of Karnataka's largest mango-producing districts with 45,000 hectares under cultivation, witnessed severe distress among Totapuri and Benisha growers.

Farmer lesaders urged the government to implement the Price Deficiency Payment Scheme and improve infrastructure. They noted that Kolar has only four fruit-processing units with a capacity of 900 tonnes a day, compared to Andhra Pradesh's 41 units with a combined capacity of 12,300 tonnes. Many reportedly left ripe fruits unharvested as they cannot afford the costs. —*Salar News*

CM DKS launches SCOUT-2.0 for meritorious undergraduate students

BENGALURU, 22 JUNE

Chief Minister DK Shivakumar launched the SCOUT-2.0 programme on Monday, an initiative aimed at supporting meritorious undergraduate students. Organised jointly by the State Higher Education Department and the British Council, the event was held at the Vidhana Soudha conference hall. The programme offers 30 outstanding students the opportunity to learn and experience life in the UK from 27 June to 11 July.

Shivakumar said, "Education transforms lives, and empowering our youth is the best investment in Karnataka's future.

Through initiatives like SCOUT, we want talent to determine opportunities, and our government is committed to widening horizons for every student and helping them flourish in a changing world. Learn with curiosity, return with new ideas, and contribute to building a stronger Karnataka and a stronger India." —*PTI*

B-SMILE to draw plans for City projects: Byre Gowda

BENGALURU, 22 JUNE

Minister for Greater Bengaluru Krishna Byre Gowda on Monday directed Bengaluru Smart Infrastructure Limited (B-SMILE) to prepare comprehensive plans and expedite the implementation of key infrastructure projects across the city.

After reviewing projects under the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA), Gowda said the government had prepared a Detailed Project Report to construct 450 km of white-topping roads at an estimated cost of Rs 3,000 crore during 2026-27. Tenders will be invited shortly.

He said 196 km of white-topping roads had already been completed, while work on another 126 km was under way and would be finished within six months.

The tender process for the 16.7-km North-South tunnel road has been completed and sent for government approval. Tenders for the 22-km East-West tunnel corridor linking Old Madras Road and Mysuru Road will be invited in the next phase.

Gowda said the government also plans 150 km of elevated corridors and a 275-km metro network, besides strengthening bus services, as part of a long-term strategy to ease Bengaluru's traffic congestion. —*PTI*

The plastic cover with explosives in it that killed the dog —*SALAR*

DOG KILLED IN BLAST AFTER BITING EXPLOSIVES IN PLASTIC COVER

DAVANAGERE, 22 JUNE

A pet dog was killed in an explosion in Nalkudure village of Channagiri taluk in Davanagere district, after biting a plastic cover lying by the roadside, apparently mistaking it for food.

The dog, belonging to Rudresh of Arekere village, was on its way to the farmland when it picked up and bit a plastic cover found beside the road, Within moments, a massive explosion occurred, mutilating the killing it on the spot.

It is suspected that the object may have been a crude explosive device similar to those sometimes used to control wild boars, concealed inside the plastic cover. Samples of the exploded material have been sent to a laboratory for analysis, and the exact nature of the explosive will be determined after the report is received.

Villagers have demanded that those responsible be identified and subjected to strict legal action. A case has been registered at Santhebennur Police Station, and investigation is underway. — *Salar News*

MES, KRV HOLD PROTESTS OVER KANNADA LANGUAGE POLICY

BELAGAVI, 22 JUNE

The Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti (MES) on Monday staged a protest in Belagavi against the Karnataka government's decision to make Kannada mandatory in the state. The protesters marched to the Deputy Commissioner's office, raising slogans against the policy, and later submitted a memorandum to the district administration.

MES leaders alleged that the Karnataka government was failing to protect the rights of linguistic minorities. They claimed that Marathi speakers constitute more than 15 per cent of the population in parts of Karnataka and argued that, under existing provisions, government documents should also be made available in their language. The organisation also demanded that the state's policy mandating 60 per cent Kannada and 40 per cent other languages on signboards be implemented in Belagavi.

MES further sought the merger of Marathi-speaking areas, including Belagavi, Nipani, Khanapur, Karwar, Bidar and Bhalki, with Maharashtra.

Meanwhile, the Karnataka Rakshana Vedike (Karave) organised a separate march to the Deputy Commissioner's office to oppose the MES protest. Police intercepted Karave activists en route, preventing a possible confrontation between members of the two organisations. — *Salar News*

AT MYSURU RAILWAY STATION

Bangladesh migrant 'presence' sparks police verification

MYSURU, 22 JUNE

Allegations by Right-wing activists that Bangladeshi migrants were arriving in Mysuru aboard the Howrah–Mysuru Express prompted a police verification drive at the Mysuru Railway Station on Sunday, with 34 people being questioned before released.

According to a South Western Railway release, officials of the Government Railway Police (GRP) and Railway Protection Force (RPF) carried out passenger verification, including identity checks and enquiries, on Train No. 22817 (Howrah–Mysuru Express) following information about the movement of certain suspected persons.

During the exercise, members of Hindu Jagran Vedike, Mysuru Mandal, allegedly entered the railway premises and intervened in the proceedings. Subsequently, 34 individuals identified by the activists as suspected Bangladeshi nationals were taken to the GRP Police Station for verification.

Police said detailed checks were conducted and no adverse material was found against any of them. All 34 individuals were released.

The GRP has registered a case (Crime No. 12/2026) against six people under relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

The development comes after videos circulated on social media purportedly showing groups of people arriving at Mysuru City Railway Station from northern States. In one video, a man confronts several families, including women and children, alleging that they were Bangladeshi nationals and questioning their presence in the city. Some individuals are heard saying they had come in search of work.

However, the claims made in the videos could not be independently verified, and authorities have not issued any confirmation regarding the nationality of those featured.

Officials urged the public not to interfere with lawful verification and investigations and to cooperate with authorised agencies in maintaining safety, security and public order. —*Salar News*

Authorities carried out passenger verification on Train 22817 (Howrah–Mysuru Express) following sightings of 'suspected' persons —*SALARNEWS*

REBEL DEFEATS SENA MAN IN M'RASHTRA MLC ELECTIONS

MUMBAI, 22 JUNE

BJP rebel Gokul Gite caused a surprise by winning the Maharashtra legislative council's Nashik district local governing body constituency, defeating Shiv Sena's Narendra Darade. Counting for the 18 June elections to 11 seats in the Upper House showed Gite securing 357 votes against Darade's 248, winning by 109 votes.

Darade, from the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena, expressed doubts over the result, saying, "There is a serious doubt about the result as we were assured that our candidate would be supported." Tensions arose at the counting centre when Gite objected to Darade's brother, Nashik Teachers' Constituency sitting MLC Kishore's presence.

Gite's candidature was controversial, with allegations of foul language against Darade. Despite suspending his campaign, Gite remained on the ballot. In Nanded, BJP candidate Amarnath Rajurkar retained his seat, defeating Shiv Sena (UBT) nominee Krushna Patil Ashtikar.

Several candidates were elected unopposed, amid allegations of misuse of power by the ruling alliance. —PTI

'Op Tiger complete', says Shinde as 6 UBT MPs join

Rebels joined Sena 5 days after skipping Sena (UBT) meet

MUMBAI, 22 JUNE

MPs Sanjay Dina Patil, Bhausaheb Rajaram Wakchaure, Omprakash Raje Nimbalkar, Sanjay Haribhai Jadhav, Nagesh Patil Ashtikar and Sanjay Uttamrao Deshmukh with Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister and Shiv Sena chief Eknath Shinde during a press conference after joining the Shiv Sena in Mumbais on Monday –PTI

"Operation Tiger is complete now," announced Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Monday, as all six rebel Lok Sabha Members from the Shiv Sena (UBT) officially crossed over to the ruling Shiv Sena, formalising another split in the Uddhav Thackeray-led faction.

The rebels joined the Shiv Sena at an event in the presence of Shinde and other senior party leaders, five days after skipping a crucial parliamentary party meeting of the Shiv Sena (UBT) in New Delhi. The meeting was attended by only three Lok Sabha MPs of the Opposition party.

- The rebels joined the Shiv Sena at an event in the presence of Shinde and other senior party leaders, five days after skipping a crucial parliamentary party meeting of the Shiv Sena (UBT) in New Delhi

The Lok Sabha MPs of the Shiv Sena (UBT) who crossed over are Sanjay Deshmukh (Yavatmal), Sanjay Jadhav (Parbhani), Sanjay Dina Patil (Mumbai North East), Nagesh Patil-Ashtikar (Hingoli), Omprakash Rajenimbalkar (Dharashiv) and Bhausaheb Wakchaure (Shirdi).

"My operations are fool proof," said Shinde while referring to the six defected MPs as Dhurandhar (stalwarts/experts) who are connected to the ground.

"Operation Tiger" is now complete and successful," the Deputy CM declared while talking to reporters and added the Shiv Sena is now the second largest party in Maharashtra in MPs.

These rebel parliamentarians had won against the BJP and Shiv Sena candidates in the 2024 general elections. The Shiv Sena (UBT) had won nine Lok Sabha seats in Maharashtra in 2024.

"These Lok Sabha MPs have now joined the original Shiv Sena that follows the teachings of party founder, the late Balasaheb Thackeray. Four years back I took a strong step and now I have hit a sixer (a reference to the number of MPs who have switched loyalties)."

He also referred to his rebellion in June 2022 in the united Shiv Sena which brought down the Uddhav Thackeray-led Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government and catapulted him to the post of Maharashtra chief minister. —PTI

Books, dreams, hardships at CJP's protest site

NEW DELHI, 22 JUNE

A 'free library' at the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) protest site at Delhi's Jantar Mantar has emerged as a unique feature of the protest, with student leaders arguing that literacy is essential to building a better education system.

Protesters said that students, supporters and peers had collectively contributed nearly 100 books from their personal collections to create the library.

The corner was set up by the AISF of Delhi University. "As part of our 'Fight for Education with Education' initiative, we set up a library at the protest site. It shows how different this protest is from others," said Devang Aniket, an AISF member.

Many protesters were seen gathered around the book stall, reading and browsing through books on subjects ranging from biographies and anthropology to history, law and civil rights.

A protester said the presence of the books underscored the peaceful nature of the demonstration. "We set up the stall yesterday, and many young people have already picked up books while participating in the protest," he said.

The CJP remained at Jantar Mantar on Monday for the third consecutive day, continuing their protest over alleged examination irregularities and the 3 May 3 NEET paper leak. The sit-in, which began on Saturday afternoon, continued overnight with protesters staying at the site.

Amid slogans demanding the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, participants shared personal stories and their support for the movement. Among them were three friends from Uttarakhand who travelled to New Delhi without informing their parents.

"We told our parents that we were going to Delhi for an interview. We plan to stay until the protest ends," said 24-year-old Manpreet Singh, who came with his friends. —PTI

Maharashtra legislature gets face recognition

MUMBAI, 22 JUNE

Entry to the Maharashtra legislature complex will be governed by a face recognition system from Tuesday, announced Assembly Speaker Rahul Narwekar, who granted a one-day exemption to journalists, officials, and employees facing registration issues. During the first day of the monsoon session, Narwekar stated in the House that a procedure for the system's implementation had been finalised, and most legislators had been registered. He said, "Accordingly, it has been decided that entry to the Vidhan Bhavan will be through the face recognition system. The face recognition of most MLAs has been completed so far, and their entry is taking place smoothly."—PTI

TMC's Aroop appears before cops in Messi event

KOLKATA, JUNE 22

Former West Bengal minister Aroop Biswas appeared before the Bidhannagar Police on Monday for the second time in connection with the probe into alleged irregularities surrounding an event featuring Argentine football star Lionel Messi. The case stems from a complaint lodged by event organiser Shatadru Dutta, who accused Biswas of ticket black-marketing, extortion, cheating and criminal intimidation in connection with the high-profile football event held at Salt Lake Stadium on December 13 last year. An FIR was registered on 17 May under various provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), including cheating, extortion and criminal intimidation. Dutta has alleged that nearly 22,000 tickets for the event were sold in the black market. —PTI

Keralam PM SHRI protest by CPI turns tense

T'PURAM, 22 JUNE

Police on Monday used water cannons against CPI student and youth activists protesting outside the Kerala Assembly against the PM SHRI scheme while former minister and party MLA K Rajan was addressing the gathering. The protest was organised by the All India Students' Federation and the All India Youth Federation, both affiliated with the CPI, demanding that the state government withdraw from the Prime Minister Schools for Rising India scheme. The previous Left Democratic Front (LDF) government had signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Union government for the implementation of the scheme. However, it was later put on hold following protests by the CPI and some other opposition parties. —PTI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in West Bengal on Monday presented its maiden budget –PTI

WELFARE TO GROWTH POLITICS: BJP PRESENTS 1ST BENGAL BUDGET

KOLKATA, 22 JUNE

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in West Bengal on Monday presented its maiden budget, six weeks after a landmark electoral victory.

The Rs 4.38 lakh crore Budget for 2026-27 seeks to retain Bengal's expansive welfare state while repositioning growth, investment, jobs and governance reform at its centre.

Women and Child Development and Social Welfare emerged as the single largest recipient with Rs 52,308 crore.

Panchayats and Rural Development received Rs 51,836 crore, while School Education got Rs 44,948 crore.

The BJP's Annapurna Yojana replaced the TMC's Lakshmir Bhandar. Additional support for pregnant women, enhanced pensions, assistance for unemployed youth through the Bharosa scheme and incentives for girl students in higher education were announced.

One lakh government jobs – including 20,000 police personnel, 50,000 teaching and non-teaching staff and vacancies across departments – were also announced.

A 20 per cent hike was made in dearness allowance – an issue that had generated sustained resentment against the previous government – taking the total DA to 38 per cent.

Agriculture allocation, however, declined to Rs 8,565 crore, while Industry and Commerce allocation jumped to Rs 3,267 crore. The Information Technology and Electronics department's allocation doubled to Rs 506 crore.

Home and Hill Affairs allocation rose to Rs 17,925 crore, reinforcing the government's emphasis on law and order, border security and administrative control.

In contrast, allocation for Minority Affairs and Madrasah Education dropped to Rs 2,165 crore, reflecting the BJP's attempt to move away from what it calls identity-driven welfare and towards broader, department-neutral social spending.

Allocation for North Bengal Development almost doubled to Rs 1,821 crore, while that for Paschimanchal Unnayan Affairs rose to Rs 1,611 crore. North Bengal and Jangalmahal were the regions that fuelled the BJP's rise to governing party. The Budget's spending pattern suggests that the government intends to reward those electoral strongholds through infrastructure, connectivity and development spending.

SPEAKER SAYS NO DEBATE

Uproar in TN Assembly over Mekedatu dam

CHENNAI, 22 JUNE

The opposition AIADMK and DMK demanded a debate about the ammonia leak and the Mekedatu Dam row. Later, AIADMK MLAs walked out–PTI

The Tamil Nadu Assembly witnessed an uproar on Monday with the DMK and AIADMK making a vain bid to initiate a discussion on the ammonia gas leak and the Assembly resolution on the Mekedatu Dam, resulting in AIADMK members staging a walkout.

Immediately after the session commenced, Speaker JCD Prabhakar called upon Labour Minister J Mohamed Farvas to read out the statement on the ammonia gas tragedy in Tiruvallur district that claimed the lives of five women. Both the opposition parties asked the Speaker to allow a discussion first.

AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami asked Prabhakar to allow a discussion on the Mekedatu Dam resolution passed by the Assembly on 19 June.

An argument ensued when the Speaker declined to allow any discussion before the government statement under Assembly Rule 110.

When the minister's speech was interrupted, the Speaker asked them to remain silent till Farvas read out the statement.

But, Palaniswami insisted that the Speaker take up the issue that they wanted to raise and entered into an argument with the Speaker who had earlier cautioned the members.

Refusing to accept the Speaker's ruling against them, the AIADMK members staged a walkout from the TN Assembly. —PTI

Odisha Speaker rejects plea to disqualify 11 MLAs for cross-voting

BHUBANESWAR, 22 JUNE

Odisha Assembly Speaker Surama Padhy has dismissed opposition petitions to disqualify 11 MLAs over alleged anti-party activities and cross-voting during the March 16 Rajya Sabha elections. While BJD chief whip Pramila Mallik sought the disqualification of eight BJD MLAs, Congress Legislature Party leader Rama Chandra Kadam aimed to disqualify three Congress MLAs.

The Odisha Assembly secretariat, in a 19 June notification, described the petitions as cryptic, vague, unsubstantiated, and failing to meet statutory requirements, stating, "The petition suffers from gross infirmity or defects have been presented in sure ignorance of the statutory requirements and do not deserve any consideration."

The order noted that evidence did not establish voluntary resignation or defection under the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution, and the petitions did not comply with mandatory rules. Additionally, the petitions were not verified as required by the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, and lacked properly authenticated documents and affidavits.

The BJD had sought disqualification of eight MLAs, including Chakramani Kanhar and Devi Ranjan Tripathy, alleging they had not voluntarily relinquished party affiliation. The Congress petition targeted Sofia Firdous, Ramesh Jena, and Dasarath Gamag.

The Speaker invoked powers under Rule 7(2) of the Defection Rules, 1987, dismissing the petitions without examining the cross-voting allegations. The incident occurred during the elections for four RS seats. —PTI

Doval, Wang Yi hold talks on India-China ties

NEW DELHI, 22 JUNE

Indian NSA Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi held "constructive and forward-looking" discussions during the BRICS National Security Advisers' meeting in New Delhi.

The MEA said, "The two sides reviewed developments and noted progress towards normalisation," emphasising that "stable relations contribute to building trust."

The meeting reflects a shift from confrontation to dialogue, amid efforts to de-escalate tensions sfter the 2020 border clash and subsequent diplomatic efforts, including talks between leaders. —ANI

NEW LEADER FOR BRITAIN SOON

Starmer, the UK PM who secured India FTA

LONDON, 22 JUNE

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi –PTI

Keir Starmer, elected Britain's Prime Minister with a landslide victory in July 2024, had pledged to finalise the much-anticipated Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with India. Just days before resigning at 10 Downing Street on Monday morning, he met Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the G7 Summit in France, where both leaders agreed on 15 July as the FTA's implementation date.

As the India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) is set to boost bilateral trade worth £48 billion, the UK is expected to have a new leader. Starmer said during his visit to Mumbai last October, "It's not just a piece of paper, it's a launchpad for growth. With India set to be the third biggest economy in 2028, and trade becoming quicker and cheaper, the opportunities are unparalleled."

The 63-year-old MP for Holborn and St Pancras is credited with reversing Labour's fortunes after their defeat in December 2019 and rebuilding ties with British Indians, who felt alienated under Jeremy Corbyn. His approach is reflected in Labour's 2024 manifesto, which committed to a "new strategic partnership with India," including security, education, technology, and climate cooperation.

- Keir Starmer, elected Britain's PM in July 2024, had pledged to finalise the FTA with India. A few days before resigning on Monday he had met PM Narendra Modi at the G7 summit where both had agreed to implement the FTA on 15 July

Starmer, knighted by Queen Elizabeth II, has a background in law, having served as Director of Public Prosecutions. He is married to NHS worker Victoria and has two teenage children. His upbringing in Surrey and personal experiences with his mother's illness have shaped his strong work ethic and determination. —PTI

Jairam seeks clarifications on Great Nicobar port

NEW DELHI, 22 JUNE

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh has written to Union Minister Sarbanand Sonowal, seeking clarity on the development of a transhipment port under the Great Nicobar Island (GNI) project. Ramesh urged him to share details of the tender timeline for the International Container Transhipment Port (ICTP) at Galathea Bay, and the final selection of the private partner and operator. He questioned whether 100 per cent private ownership would be permitted, as the minimum private shareholding is set at 55 per cent, asking if there is a minimum public shareholding.

Ramesh, a former environment minister, expressed concern over ecological damage, citing the Public Private Partnership Appraisal Committee's meetings on 17 and 19 March 2026. He noted that the committee identified risks such as developing a large greenfield port and diverting transshipment traffic from established ports like Colombo, Singapore, and Port Klang. He questioned the push for the project despite ecological risks.

He sought clarity on the shareholding rules, private port ownership, and whether the Ministry would provide VGF funding, since the PPPAC rejected the government's VGF request. Ramesh also asked for the tender timeline and final selection details. He previously raised concerns about environmental assessments and ecological destruction, criticising the project as a threat to coral colonies and India's natural heritage.—PTI

Punjab approves capping school fee hike at 5%

CHANDIGARH, 22 JUNE

The Punjab Cabinet has approved an ordinance to limit private school fee hikes to 5 per cent annually. After a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema announced the decision, which will now be sent to the Governor for approval. Education Minister Harjot Singh Bains added that if a school increased fees by over 15 per cent in the past three years, the excess amount would be refunded. Schools seeking to raise fees above 5 per cent must submit a request to a committee led by a divisional commissioner, which will review and decide. The cap covers tuition, mandatory charges, and funds collected by schools, as announced by the Chief Minister on 3 June.—*PTI*

Actor Pankaj's brother injured in axe attack

PATNA, 22 JUNE

Actor Pankaj Tripathi's brother was injured after being allegedly attacked with an axe during a land dispute in their ancestral village in Bihar's Gopalganj district, police said on Monday. The incident took place late on Sunday at Belsand village in the Madhopur police station area, they said. "Bijendra Nath Tiwari was attacked with an axe during a land dispute in his village," ADG (Law and Order) Sudhanshu Kumar said. The main suspect in the case has been arrested, and the weapon used in the attack has been recovered, he said. Bijendra Nath Tiwari was admitted to a hospital in Gopalganj late on Sunday night and later referred to a super speciality medical facility in Patna, where he is undergoing treatment, officials said. —*PTI*

13 trapped in UP mall lift for 35 minutes, girl faints

BAREILLY, 22 JUNE

Thirteen people, including women and children, were trapped inside a mall lift in Bareilly for about 35 minutes during a power outage, police said. The incident occurred at City Centre LA Mall in Civil Lines at around 10pm on Sunday. The lift, stuck between floors, caused panic among passengers. Attempts to contact mall security failed, and a teenager, Shalini, fainted. Some inside broke the door open with help from staff and bystanders. The rescued occupants included Shalini, who was taken to hospital. SP Manush Pareek confirmed police recorded statements. The mall management explained that during generator start-up, a kick from inside the lift caused the sensor to stop functioning. —*PTI*

Under-construction UP bridge's beam crashes, 2 injured

HARDOI, 22 JUNE

Two workers were injured when a beam of an under-construction bridge collapsed in Hardoi district, officials said. The incident happened in Saidpur while construction was underway, with the heavy beam being placed using a hydra machine. Eyewitnesses reported that part of the beam suddenly fell, trapping Rahul and Rajeshwar beneath. Local residents and workers pulled them out and rushed them to hospital, later referred to district hospital. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath directed officials to ensure rescue and recovery, wishing the injured a speedy recovery. District Magistrate Anunay Jha said injuries included a hand injury and a head wound. An investigation into safety lapses during construction is underway amid demands for accountability.—*PTI*

Ammonia gas leak toll 5, TN govt says probe on

Workers' bodies to be taken to their hometown in Odisha

CHENNAI, 22 JUNE

The toll in the ammonia gas leak tragedy in Tamil Nadu's Tiruvallur district increased to five. Arrangements are on to shift the workers bodies to their home town, **Labour Welfare Minister J Mohamed Farvas** informed the Assembly on Monday.

Health officials said two women died on 21 June and three more women succumbed on Monday, taking the number of fatalities in the gas leak accident to five.

Responding to the tragedy, amidst disruptions and heated exchanges between Speaker JCD Prabhakar and AIADMK members over the subject, the minister said Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay has constituted a joint team comprising officials of the health and the PCB to submit a preliminary report within 24 hours and a comprehensive report in three days.

NDRF personnel arrive at a seafood export unit after an ammonia leak in Manjangaranai in the Thiruvallur district of Tamil Nadu —*PTI*

He said the chief minister had already announced a solatium of Rs 2 lakh each to the families of the victims.

Assuring action against anyone found responsible for the safety lapse, **Farvas** emphasised that the government would strictly enforce accountability.

CM Vijay had ordered that financial compensation under the Employees' State Insurance (ESI) scheme and the government relief fund should be expedited and delivered to the affected families.

VICTIMS FROM ODISHA

Odisha's Labour Minister Ganesh Ram Singkhuntia said on Monday that attempts are being made to bring back the bodies of the five women who died in an ammonia gas leak at a private fish meal export factory in TN's Tiruvallur district to their native place in Keonjhar district.

Expressing grief, Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi announced an ex gratia of Rs 4 lakh from the CM's Relief Fund for the next of kin of each deceased worker. — *PTI*

Won't open pandora's box about collegium proceedings: SC

NEW DELHI, 22 JUNE

"We don't want to open a pandora's box regarding the proceedings of the collegium," the Supreme Court said on Monday while refusing to entertain a petition filed by a judicial officer from HP.

The petitioner had approached the SC alleging that names of officers junior to him were recommended for appointment as judges of the Himachal Pradesh HC.

Justices BV Nagarathna and Joymalya Bagchi observed these are matters which ultimately dependant on the subjective satisfaction of the HC collegium.

"Can on the judicial side, the Supreme Court say to the collegium you do this or you do that and you consider the name? It can't be done," the bench said.

"On the judicial side, we don't want to open a pandora's box regarding the proceedings of the HC collegium or the SC collegium," it said.

Senior advocate Balbir Singh, appearing for the petitioner, said the petitioner is the senior-most judicial officer in the state and has around 10 more years of service left.

The bench observed that merely because someone is high in seniority does not mean that he is entitled to elevation. After the SC showed its disinclination to entertain the petition, the petitioner said he would withdraw the plea with liberty to seek appropriate reliefs before the HC's competent authority on the administrative side or seek remedy on the judicial side. The bench disposed of the matter.

"There is no rejection of your candidature. Please wait for some time," the bench said. — *PTI*

8 women fall ill after C-section in Rajasthan

JODHPUR, 22 JUNE

Eight women at the district hospital here have developed serious health issues, including kidney failure, following caesarean sections. This incident is the latest in a series of such cases reported in Rajasthan. The women experienced excessive bleeding and low blood pressure post-surgery. Two women with severe kidney infections have been transferred to Mathuradas Mathur Hospital, where they are receiving intensive treatment.

In response, the hospital administration has temporarily closed the operation theatre. Samples from the operating theatre have been collected for investigation, and all surgical procedures are suspended until laboratory reports are received, officials confirmed. Earlier, similar incidents resulted in the deaths of four women in Kota and two in Bikaner, all after caesarean deliveries.

An expert team from AIIMS-Delhi and other institutions has been set up to investigate the Kota cases, with investigations also underway in Bikaner.

BS Jodha, Principal of SN Medical College, said the eight caesarean sections were performed on Saturday. Two women were shifted to MDM Hospital, and the remaining six are being treated at the district hospital.

One experienced severe bleeding; another, diabetic, suffered from low blood pressure and anaemia, conditions affecting normal kidney function.

District Hospital PMO Kulbir Chopra stated that the condition of the six women is currently stable, and operations will remain suspended

28 held in Bihar for attempting irregularities during NEET

PATNA, 22 JUNE

At least 28 people have been held for attempting irregularities in the NEET-UG re-examination in Bihar, police said on Monday.

ADG Sudhanshu Kumar said 18 staff members associated with the biometric verification system had been arrested for colluding with dummy candidates by compromising the verification process.

Nine impersonators were detained in Lakhisarai late on Sunday for allegedly appearing in the examination on behalf of registered candidates, SP Prerna Kumar said.

Police said they have also apprehended one Ankit Raj, described as a middleman from Gaya Medical College.

POLICE HELP GIRL

Kochi Police said Sana Jose had arrived at the Government Higher Secondary School in Elamakkara for NEET when security found she did not have a passport-size photograph.

CPOs Chinchu and Aswathy alerted their superiors, following which SI Lalu Joseph contacted Binu, owner of Zion Studio.

Binu immediately rushed to the studio and arranged passport size photographs for the student.

CANDIDATE CAUGHT

An 18-year-old candidate, who appeared for the NEET re-exam in Hyderabad on 21 June was apprehended after he was allegedly caught for malpractice, police said.

The student, a resident of Achampet, came to the ZiP High School in Ragannaguda around 7 am and placed a phone in the washroom ventilator.

At 11 am, he entered the washroom, put the phone in a zip-lock cover and hid it in a flush tank, police said.

During the examination, the accused complained of stomach pain and requested to use the restroom. Police said the accused was caught red-handed searching for answers on his phone. He is now in police custody. . — *PTI*

NEET candidates wait at an examination centre for security checks and

US NOTIFIES SERVICES FOR INDIA'S APACHE

WASHINGTON, 22 JUNE

The US has formally notified the proposed sale of support services and related equipment for India's Apache helicopters and M777A2 Ultra-Light Howitzers at an estimated cost of USD 482.2 million.

The Defence Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), which administers the UD Foreign Military Sales (FMS) programme, issued the arms sales notification on 17 June.

On 18 May, the Department of State informed the US Congress about the possible sales of services for Apache Helicopters and M777A2 ultra-light howitzers to India.

India inducted the M777A2 Ultra-Light Howitzers to improve its artillery capabilities in mountainous terrain.

The Indian Army also operates AH-64E Apache attack helicopters for precision strike and battlefield support.

India had requested long-term support for its M777A2 Ultra-Light Howitzers. The estimated cost of the Apache support package is USD 198.2 million.

The principal contractors for the Apache support services deal will be Boeing Company and Lockheed Martin, while BAE Systems, located in Cumbria, UK, will be the principal contractor for the M777 howitzer support programme.

The proposed sales would not alter the basic military balance in the region and would have no adverse impact on the defence readiness of the US, it said. — *PTI*

SUMMER SNOW

People gather at a snow site at the Baralacha Pass in the Lahaul and Spiti district of Himachal Pradesh on Monday—*PTI*

Unpaid Indians approach S'pore govt

SINGAPORE, 22 JUNE

Around 100 migrant workers, mostly from India and Bangladesh, turned up at Singapore's Ministry of Manpower (MOM) on Monday alleging that their employer had failed to pay their wages for the last two months.

The workers were employed by KPA Engineering, an air-conditioner maintenance services company, which they claim has ceased operations.

"We heard the company closed down its business. We are worried because we haven't been paid for some time," an Indian worker, identified only as Sampath, told local daily 'The Straits Times.' "We didn't know who else to turn to," he added.

The workers met Singapore's Ministry of Manpower officials after they were identified as employees of KPA Engineering.

Rajenderan Berthap, 36, an air-conditioning and mechanical ventilation technician with the company, said ministry officials assured them that the matter would be investigated.

Ng Hwei Min, general manager of the Tripartite Alliance for Dispute Management (TADM), said the agency and Ministry of Manpower were providing assistance to the workers, including contacting their employers.

"Ministry of Manpower will take the necessary and appropriate enforcement action against the companies if they are found to have breached any of the employment laws," she said.

She added that the immediate priority was ensuring the affected workers had access to suitable accommodation and essential things like food and medical care.

According to Singapore business records, KPA Engineering has two foreign directors, one of whom is also a director of six other engineering-related companies. — *PTI*

SPURIOUS MEDICINES

Central body finds 46 drugs not of standard quality

NEW DELHI, 22 JUNE

The Central Drugs Laboratories found 46 drug samples manufactured by various firms to be "not of standard quality (NSQ)" in its monthly drug alert for May, health officials said on Monday. The State Drugs Testing Laboratories have identified 113 drug samples as NSQ, they said.

The list of NSQ and spurious drugs is displayed on the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation's (CDSCO) portal every month.

"For May 2026, Central Drugs Laboratories have identified 46 drug samples to be NSQ and State Drugs Testing Laboratories have identified 113 drug samples as NSQ," a health ministry statement said.

Identification of drug samples as NSQ is done based on failure of the drug sample in one or the other quality parameters. The failure is specific to the drug products of the batch tested by the government laboratory and it does not warrant any concerns on other drugs in the market, it said.

The list of NSQ and spurious drugs is displayed on the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation's (CDSCO) website every month—*PTI*

In May 2026, one drug sample from Assam was identified as a spurious drug, which was manufactured by unauthorised manufacturers using a brand name owned by another company. The matter is being investigated and action will be taken.

This task of identifying NSQ medicines is being undertaken regularly in collaboration with state regulators to ensure that these drugs are removed from the market. — *PTI*

Punjab man held in Chhattisgarh for ISI 'links'

JANJGIR-CHAMPA, 22 JUNE

A 23-year-old man hailing from Punjab has been arrested in Chhattisgarh's Janjgir-Champa district for allegedly sharing sensitive information with Pakistan-based Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) operatives, police said.

The accused, identified as Sevak Singh, a resident of Tarn Taran district in Punjab, was in touch with persons linked to a Pakistan-backed ISI network and discussions about weapons supply through cross-border channels had surfaced during the investigation, they said.

Singh was arrested during a tenant verification drive carried out by police in Akaltara town, Janjgir-Champa Superintendent of Police Vijay Kumar Pandey said on Sunday. It was not immediately clear what he was doing in the Chhattisgarh town. — *PTI*

Police watch as Nihangs stand on the roof of a gurdwara demanding the release of four Nihangs who were held in U'khand's Chamoli district—*PTI*

Nihang-admin standoff in U'khand, army deployed

RUDRAPRAYAG, 22 JUNE

Army troops have arrived in Nagrasu town, Rudraprayag district, where a standoff continues at a gurudwara between local authorities and a group of Nihangs demanding the release of four arrested members. The Nihangs, armed with spears and swords, have been entrenched on the gurudwara roof since around 4pm on Saturday, remaining there after more than 40 hours.

The gurudwara is situated in Nagrasu, between Rudraprayag and Gauchar, used by Sikh pilgrims travelling to and from Hemkund Sahib. The Nihangs are protesting the arrest of their four members, linked to a clash in Karnaprayag, Chamoli district, on 16 June. During this clash, the Nihangs reportedly injured locals with swords, leading to arrests.

Sources say the police and ITBP men have been deployed, to persuade the Nihangs to come down. The group is armed with weapons such as spears, swords, axes, and kirpans. SP Niharika Tomar confirmed that one Nihang had come down to speak. She refuted reports of hostages, although gurudwara caretaker Sardar Beant Singh claimed a hostage was briefly held but later released. — PTI

Keir Starmer at his first speech as Prime Minister on the steps of Downing Street in July 2024

Starmer's swift political unravelling

Dutiful rather than dynamic, Keir Starmer was elected Britain's prime minister to be a safe pair of hands who would end years of political chaos under the Conservatives.

His term is ending less than two years later after missteps, party infighting and one colossal error of judgment that indirectly ensnared him in the scandals surrounding Jeffrey Epstein, a man he had never met and whose sexual crimes he was not complicit in.

Starmer's selling point was "no more soap opera politics," said Rob Ford, a political science professor at the University of Manchester. Instead, Ford said, his government was "the antithesis of what he said he was going to be about, and it's very hard to survive that".

A trouncing for Starmer's Labour Party in a midterm set of local and regional elections on 7 May proved the final straw. It triggered a series of government resignations and challenges that look set to sweep former Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham into 10 Downing Street.

It's a precipitous downfall from 4 July, 2024, when Starmer brought the centre-left Labour Party back to power after 14 years, winning 411 of the 650 seats in the House of Commons.

Standing outside 10 Downing St the next day, Starmer pledged to restore "respect to politics" and lead a government of "public service".

Some of the problems that felled him were baked into his victory. Despite Labour's huge majority in Parliament, it was backed by only 34 per cent of voters, and many appeared motivated by anger at the Conservatives rather than enthusiasm for Labour.

This lack of excitement was compounded as Starmer made a series of missteps.

An early furore over accepting free gifts including designer spectacles and Taylor Swift concert tickets was followed by policy U-turns, especially attempts to cut welfare spending that stirred anger in Labour ranks.

What ultimately cost him his job was appointing Peter Mandelson to the plum post of the UK's ambassador to the US.

Starmer's spokesman said the PM stood by Peter Mandelson, who was recently arrested for misconduct in public office – *NO 10 DOWNING STREET*

Mandelson was seen as someone who could help Britain navigate US President Donald Trump's second term. He helped secure a trade deal that spared Britain some of the tariffs Trump imposed on countries around the world.

But the choice of Mandelson — who in 2003 called himself Epstein's "best pal" — backfired spectacularly when documents came to light in September 2025 showing how close his ties to Epstein had been. Starmer fired Mandelson, but further revelations in the following months plunged his leadership into crisis.

Because Starmer entered politics in his 50s, after a successful law career, he lacked the "political radar" to spot potential booby traps, Ford said.

Starmer's legal career culminated in him becoming chief prosecutor for England and Wales, prosecuting people charged with terrorism, organised crime and other serious offences.

He was knighted for leading the Crown Prosecution Service, and opponents used his title, Sir Keir Starmer, to paint him as an out-of-touch "lefty London lawyer".

That view stuck, even though he comes from humble roots.

The son of a toolmaker, he loves soccer, still plays the sport at 63, and enjoys watching his beloved Arsenal over a beer in his local pub.

He and his wife Victoria, who works in occupational health, have two teenage children they strive to keep out of the public eye.

First elected to Parliament in 2015, he was picked to lead and rebuild Labour five years later after the party's worst election result since 1935.

Starmer dragged Labour toward the political centre after taking over from veteran socialist Jeremy Corbyn. He ditched some of his predecessor's more left-wing policies and apologised for antisemitism that an internal investigation concluded had been allowed to spread under Corbyn.

Starmer was especially scathing in attacks on Boris Johnson, who allowed parties inside Downing Street during the Covid-19 pandemic in violation of lockdown rules.

But being prime minister required a different skill set and Starmer often fell short, lacking the flexibility and political instincts the job required.

Starmer seemed far more comfortable dealing with international events, notably in rallying European support for Ukraine in its war with Russia and working to mitigate the economic and political turmoil unleashed by the US-Israeli war on Iran.

That conflict opened a rift between Starmer and Trump, with whom he had initially forged a friendly relationship despite their divergent politics.

Initially reluctant to criticise Trump publicly, Starmer began taking a firmer stand after the US president's threats to take over Greenland. His critiques became sharper after the start of the Iran war, and by March Trump was deriding him as "not Winston Churchill" and mocking the Royal Navy.

Starmer's decision to largely keep the UK out of the war chimed with the public mood but did not revive his party's support.

For many Labour lawmakers, the Mandelson-Epstein revelations were the final straw because they shone a spotlight on Starmer's lack of judgment.

Starmer sacked Mandelson after emails published in September showed Mandelson remained friends with Epstein after the late financier's 2008 conviction for sex offenses involving a minor.

Emails made public in January 2026 suggested Mandelson also passed on sensitive — and potentially market-moving — government information to the disgraced financier in 2009, when he was a Labour Cabinet member.

Mandelson has been arrested and questioned by police on suspicion of misconduct in public office, but has not been charged and does not face allegations of sexual misconduct.

Then came the revelation that Mandelson had been appointed despite failing security checks for the ambassador's job.

Starmer's apology for the appointment and insistence he hadn't known about the failed security vetting increasingly fell on deaf ears. —*PTI*

SALAR سالار

Burnham smashed UK's version of One Nation

The favourite to replace Keir Starmer is new Labour MP Andy Burnham, who had a landmark win in the Makerfield byelection on 18 June. Burnham's victory – in which he staved off a threat from far-right party Reform UK – has major implications for the UK government.

But are there also lessons for the Albanese government in handling One Nation?

In Australia and the United Kingdom, establishment parties are losing support to populist radical right challengers such as One Nation and Reform. Both parties have seen significant success in byelections and sub-national elections.

One Nation had a landmark result in the Farrer byelection, while Reform now has six seats in the House of Commons.

In recent state elections in Australia and local council elections in the UK, One Nation and Reform have also gained electoral ground. One Nation won four lower house seats and three upper house seats in the South Australian election in March. In the UK, Reform gained 1,452 councillors in the May local elections. Not only did Reform make significant gains in May, it was Labour's worst local election defeat on record, losing almost 1,500 councillor seats.

This makes the Makerfield result more remarkable. Burnham, who had been blocked from standing in the February byelection in Gorton and Denton, consolidated Labour's position. Labour's vote in Makerfield rose 9.6 percentage points to 54.8 per cent.

While byelections are often poor predictors of general election results, Labour has seized on Burnham's success as a possible blueprint for defeating Reform.

Although Labour holds a commanding parliamentary majority, its 2024 victory was built on just 33.7 per cent of the vote – a record low for a governing majority. Many Labour MPs therefore hold marginal seats, heightening concerns over Reform's consistent polling lead.

New Labour MP Andy Burnham –*PTI*

THE BURNHAM FORMULA

Burnham's success in Makerfield was partly due to his personal profile. A nationally significant politician for three decades, he has maintained strong local roots. His tenure as Greater Manchester's first mayor has been widely praised.

Burnham also offered voters an unusual proposition, urging them to elect him as a Labour MP to remove a Labour prime minister. With Starmer recording the lowest personal satisfaction rating since 1979, that message proved attractive.

Starmer's unpopularity allowed Burnham to cast himself as an outsider promising change. As he has moved closer to Number 10, Burnham's own approval ratings have slipped into negative territory, though from a much higher starting point.

Burnham's governing style also offers hope to Labour MPs seeking to revive the party. Hope was central to his campaign and appears to resonate with many British voters.

Burnham has pledged to unite Labour. While Starmer's centrist approach marginalised the party's progressive wing, Burnham is expected to adopt a more consultative leadership style.

Although his agenda is not fully developed, he is expected to shift Labour left on issues including public control of transport, utilities and housing.

Often described as ideologically flexible and valuing political salesmanship over rigid policy conviction, Burnham may benefit from that flexibility given Labour's fiscal constraints and narrow 2024 manifesto.

His co-authored book Head North outlines many of his ideas, including democratic reforms such as a written constitution, proportional representation, greater powers for regional governments and replacing the House of Lords with a directly elected body. His response to democratic disillusionment can be summarised as moving Britain in a more Australian direction.

BLOC POLITICS

The comparison with Australia extends to Labor traditions. Unlike Starmer, Burnham is widely seen as having an instinctive connection with the labour movement, similar to Anthony Albanese's. While Starmer struggled to maintain party unity, Albanese has largely kept discipline within Labor.

Burnham's victory presents a setback for Reform but also points to a broader consolidation of British politics into left- and right-wing blocs.

Green and Liberal Democrat support declined in Makerfield while Burnham surged. The Conservative vote collapsed, Reform increased its support slightly and the far-right Restore party won 6.8 per cent. That suggests Reform could face a challenge from vote-splitting on the right, driven by more hardline parties.

A similar dynamic could emerge in Australia. One Nation has consolidated much of the radical and far-right vote, but the party has a history of internal divisions and clashes involving Pauline Hanson and other senior figures. Future fractures could produce the kind of right-wing fragmentation seen in Makerfield.

The left has traditionally benefited from stronger preference flows in Australia. Rather than moving further to the political centre, the Makerfield lesson for Labor may be to reconnect with labour values, including stronger workers' rights, a robust welfare state and a commitment to fairness and equality. —*The Conversation*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

A decade after Brexit, economic woes fuel discontent in the UK

Simon Boyd's firm makes prefabricated steel structures on the south coast of England and ships them to customers as far away as Ghana and Barbados. Mike Hawes represents Britain's carmakers as the head of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders.

The business leaders were on different sides of the debate when Britain voted to leave the European Union in 2016. But 10 years later they are both frustrated by Brexit.

A decade ago, backers promised that Brexit would be the key to a bright new future where, freed from the edicts of EU bureaucrats, Britain would regain control of its laws and its borders and the economy would boom. But the reality failed to live up to the hype as Britain struggled to adjust to life without unfettered access to the 27-nation free trade bloc and its market of 450 million people.

Economic growth is anaemic, taxes are high, public services are creaking and successive governments have been unable to stem the flow of migrants who wash up on the English Channel coast in inflatable boats. As a result, it's not exactly a happy anniversary.

"No, it's not delivered everything that was said it would deliver on the tin, but it is delivering," Boyd told The Associated Press. "It's very sluggish. You only need to look at the statistics to see that."

Boyd, the managing director of REIDSteel, which employs about 130 people at a plant in Christchurch, England, still stands behind his decision to support Brexit, but blames lackluster results on politicians who weren't committed to delivering. Britain has also experienced unexpected challenges over the past 10 years, from the Covid-19 pandemic to the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, Boyd said.

ECONOMISTS SEE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES

The Brexit vote quickly increased costs for businesses as they prepared for an uncertain future during years of negotiation over the UK's new relationship with the EU. Then, when Britain finally left the bloc on 31 January, 2020, new rules governing trade in goods and services made it more expensive and time-consuming to do business with European partners.

Creon Butler, who leads the global economy and finance programme at Chatham House, a London-based think tank, said there were long-term consequences to leaving the European single market.

"Whatever was promised, whatever one hoped for, (you have) to accept that it has been a major loss of wealth and prosperity for us through the choice we made to leave," he said.

Thousands took to the streets in pro and anti Brexit rallies in the UK in 2018 – *BREXIT123*

By most measures, the British economy today is weaker than it would have been without Brexit, according to a recent report published by the National Bureau of Economic Research in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The report, compiled by researchers in Britain, Germany and the US, compares the performance of the UK economy to 33 other countries, including its European neighbours, the US, Canada and Japan.

Brexit has reduced Britain's gross domestic product, a broad measure of economic output, by 6 per to 8 per cent, investment by 12 per cent to 13 per cent and productivity by 3 per cent to 4 per cent, the researchers concluded.

CARMAKERS HAD MANY CHALLENGES

Britain's carmakers were early and outspoken opponents of Brexit, arguing that increased red tape surrounding shipments of parts and finished vehicles would damage an industry built on a network of interlinked factories in multiple European countries.

Those concerns reduced investment in the UK auto industry because international carmakers were less likely to see Britain as an attractive way into the European market. Brexit supporters trumpeted the freedom to negotiate its own trade agreements as one of the primary benefits of leaving the EU, and Britain has since signed dozens of deals with countries ranging from Australia to India to the United States.

But EU countries still account for 41 per cent of Britain's exports and half its imports, according to the latest government figures.

During more than 50 years as a member of the EU and its predecessors, many British businesses also came to rely on Europe as a source of cheap labour, especially after the bloc's eastward expansion in 2004. That pipeline dried up after Brexit ended the free movement of labour, one of the bloc's founding principals.

The owners of Britain's curry restaurants have been especially hard hit by the loss of Eastern European workers who went home rather than deal with burdensome new visa requirements. They're furious because the industry backed Brexit after assurances it would lead to more visas for South Asian cooks, something that hasn't happened.

POLLS SUGGEST FRUSTRATION WITH BREXIT IS GROWING

Starmer's move comes as a survey by the Ipsos polling firm, the Policy Institute at King's College London and the think tank UK in a Changing Europe suggests that frustration with Brexit is growing.

The survey of 2,245 Britons aged 18 and older carried out in May, found that 48 per cent said Brexit was going worse than they expected, up from 28 per cent in March 2021. Some 9 per cent said it was going better than expected and about one in three said it was going as expected.

But Boyd said the most important survey is still the one that took place on June 23, 2016, when 51.9 per cent of those who cast ballots -- or 17.4 million people -- voted to leave EU.

He continues to believe that Britain has a brighter future outside the EU. And there's no going back, he said. —*PTI*

Burnham stakes claim to No. 10 after Keir's exit

Manchester Mayor emerges as favourite in race; Labour eyes new PM by Sept

LONDON, 22 JUNE

Andy Burnham has confirmed he will contest the Labour leadership race following Prime Minister Keir Starmer's resignation, setting the stage for a battle to decide the next occupant of 10 Downing Street.

Burnham, the Mayor of Greater Manchester and newly elected MP for Makerfield, said he would "put myself forward as part of this process" while stressing the need for stability during the transition.

"The country expects stability, seriousness and a continued focus on the issues that matter most, and that is what it will get," Burnham said. "People want to see progress on economic growth, cost of living, public services, housing and opportunities for the next generation."

Starmer resigned as both Prime Minister and Labour leader on Monday after mounting pressure over poor poll ratings, local election setbacks and growing unrest within the party. He will remain in office in a caretaker capacity until his successor is chosen.

Leadership contest begins in July

Labour's National Executive Committee (NEC) will begin accepting nominations on 9 July. If Burnham is the sole candidate, he could be confirmed within weeks. Otherwise, the contest is expected to continue until Parliament returns from its summer recess in September.

Under Labour rules, candidates must secure the backing of at least 81 MPs, one-fifth of Labour's parliamentary party. They must also win support from five per cent of constituency parties or at least three affiliated organisations, such as trade unions. Party members and affiliates would then vote using a preferential voting system, with the winner requiring more than 50 per cent of votes. The victor would subsequently be invited by King Charles III to form a government.

Frontrunner after Makerfield victory

Burnham, 56, is widely seen as the frontrunner after his decisive by-election victory in Makerfield last week, where he defeated Reform UK and increased Labour's vote share to nearly 55 per cent.

His campaign has already won the backing of former Health Secretary Wes Streeting, who resigned from Starmer's Cabinet last month. Other potential contenders, including former deputy prime minister Angela Rayner and former Armed Forces minister Al Carns, have yet to announce whether they will run. —*PTI*

10, DOWNING STREET AND ITS REVOLVING DOOR

Before the Brexit vote in 2016, the UK had just three Prime Ministers in a decade. In the 10 years since, six have occupied 10 Downing Street, with a seventh expected soon. Here's a look at the leaders forced to quit:

DAVID CAMERON

Term: 6 years, 63 days

Quit on: June 2016

Cameron resigned on 24 June, 2016, following the results of the Brexit referendum. He campaigned heavily for the UK to remain in European Union, but 52% of the public voted to leave. He quit because he felt the nation required fresh leadership.

THERESA MAY

Term: 3 years, 11 days

Quit on: May 2019

May inherited Brexit and spent three years trying to push her withdrawal deal through Parliament. It was rejected three times, while her gamble on a snap election in 2017 cost her party its majority. After losing the support of her Cabinet and MPs, she stepped down.

BORIS JOHNSON

Term: 3 years, 44 days

Quit on: July 2022

He delivered Brexit and oversaw Britain's Covid response, but his premiership became engulfed in scandal. The Partygate row and revelations over his handling of allegations against MP Chris Pincher triggered a mass ministerial revolt. 50 officials quit in two days.

LIZ TRUSS

Term: 44 days

Quit on: October 2022

Truss entered Downing Street promising growth but sent markets into turmoil with £45 billion in unfunded tax cuts. The pound plunged, borrowing costs soared and the Bank of England was forced to intervene. She resigned after just 44 days.

RISHI SUNAK

Term: 1 year, 254 days

Quit on: July 2024

Sunak took charge after the Truss crisis and managed to stabilise markets, but struggled to revive growth or curb migration. He called an early election in 2024, that led to Conservatives' worst defeat in modern history. He resigned, taking responsibility for the loss.

KEIR STARMER

Term: 1 year, 11 months and 17 days

In 2024, Starmer was at his peak of political life after the Labours won 2024 polls by a record.

Here all that went wrong with him:

EPSTEIN FILES
Starmer faced criticism over Peter Mandelson's appointment as envoy to the US. Mandelson had ties with the late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

ELECTORAL SETBACKS
Labour suffered a bruising defeat in the 2026 local elections, reportedly losing nearly 1,500 councillors.

MINISTERIAL REVOLT
Several ministers and senior party figures quit or openly criticised Starmer's leadership, exposing deep divisions within Labour.

ECONOMY AND POLICY U-TURNS
Critics say Starmer struggled to deliver economic growth or ease cost-of-living pressures. Repeated U-turns on welfare, fiscal policy and defence spending created an image of inconsistency.

THE RETURN OF ANDY BURNHAM
Starmer's troubles deepened after Andy Burnham returned to Parliament by winning the Makerfield by-election. Burnham's comeback gave disillusioned Labour MPs a popular and credible alternative leader.

Trump slams NATO, Italian PM for not joining Iran talks

WASHINGTON DC, 22 JUNE

In a post on Truth Social, US President Donald Trump on Sunday criticised NATO members and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni for not joining efforts against what he described as Iran's "very serious Nuclear Threat," accusing allies of failing to support the United States despite decades of American security commitments costing "trillions of dollars."

The remarks come as the first round of technical talks between the United States and Iran concluded in Switzerland.

Trump had alleged that Meloni "begged" for a photo-op during the G7 summit and claimed that she is "doing poorly in Italy" and trying to pivot back to him for political gain. —*PTI*

IRAN'S SAYS 'A MAJOR PROGRESS' MADE TO END LEBANON WAR

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi shakes hands with Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif at the Burgenstock luxury hotel complex overlooking Lake Lucerne, Switzerland —*PTI*

LONDON, 22 JUNE

US-Iran talks in Switzerland made "major progress" towards ending the conflict in Lebanon, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Monday, though he cautioned that the real test would be whether fighting between Israel and Hezbollah can be halted.

Neither Israel nor Hezbollah is a signatory to the US-Iran interim agreement signed last week, but a renewed ceasefire in Lebanon appeared to be holding. Israel lifted movement restrictions near the Israel-Lebanon border on Monday, while no Israeli strikes were reported overnight. Hezbollah has not announced any attacks since Saturday, marking the longest lull in fighting since the latest war began on March 2.

US Vice-President JD Vance said the talks had laid the groundwork for a final deal. "This region has been a basket case for a very long time," he said.

In a joint statement, mediators Pakistan and Qatar hailed "encouraging progress". The interim agreement gives negotiators 60 days to resolve issues including the future of Iran's nuclear programme, which Tehran insists is for peaceful purposes.

While high-level talks have concluded, technical negotiations led by US envoys Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff will continue this week. "We wanted to set up a structure with proper political oversight, but obviously I can't stay here for the next 60 days," Vance said.

President Donald Trump did not attend the so-called "Lake Lucerne Summit", but his remarks overshadowed proceedings. Iranian state media said talks briefly paused after what it described as an "insulting message" from Trump.

Trump warned Iran to restrain Hezbollah and threatened tougher action if attacks continued.

Vance dismissed suggestions the comments derailed negotiations, saying: "When you engage in what us millennials might call trash talk, you can't expect the President of the United States not to respond." —*PTI*

Bibi rejects Trump's claim that Israel 'does as he says'

TEL AVIV, 22 JUNE

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has pushed back against assertions that he or US President Donald Trump take directives from one another.

Addressing the Jerusalem News Syndicate's International Policy Summit 2026, Netanyahu stated, "We are leaders of independent and proud countries; sometimes we don't see eye to eye."

The Prime Minister emphasised that both heads of state prioritise their respective national agendas, despite periodic friction. "... we respect each other's sovereignty and leadership and commitment to our people," he said.

This comes after Trump, when asked whether he could influence Israel to halt strikes on Lebanon in an Axios interview conducted last Friday, claimed, "I mean, they have a lot of respect for me, and they do as I say."

Meanwhile Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said in a post on X: "We don't have territorial ambitions in Lebanon, but we will not withdraw from the security zone and expose our citizens to Hezbollah's attacks and possible invasion."

Netanyahu echoed the stance on Sunday at the summit, saying once the Iran-backed group is disarmed or dismantled, Israel would welcome peace with Lebanon. —*PTI*

TANKS ROLL ON TAIWAN'S STREETS

Taiwan on Monday began a five-day military drill aimed at boosting combat readiness amid growing pressure from China. Tanks rolled through streets and highways in Taoyuan as troops conducted combat readiness patrols. The exercises are designed to test rapid deployment and simulate responses to potential Chinese military action. The drills come as Taiwan reported the presence of 23 Chinese aircraft, seven navy ships and five government vessels operating near the island over the past 24 hours —*SCREENGRAB*

China bans exports to 10 US firms over military links

NEW DELHI, 22 JUNE

China added MP Materials and USA Rare Earth, along with eight other US entities it linked to the U.S. military, to its export control list on Monday in retaliation for Washington's recent restrictions on Chinese companies, Reuters reported Monday.

According to Reuters, MP Materials, which operates the only active rare earth mine in the US, and USA Rare Earth are both involved in the mine-to-magnet supply chain. The three US companies were not available for comment outside of business hours.

The measures are a response to the "U.S. government's malicious practice" and were taken to safeguard national security and interests, as well as to fulfil international obligations such as non-proliferation, China's Commerce Ministry said in a statement on Monday.

"Organisations and individuals in any country or region are prohibited from transferring or supplying dual-use items originating in China to those entities," it said, adding that export activities should be stopped immediately.

Analysts said, however, that China's actions were a largely symbolic response to the Pentagon's 1260H list of Chinese tech companies it believes to be aiding the Chinese military. The list was updated this month to include e-commerce giant Alibaba, internet search provider Baidu and automakers BYD and NIO. —*ANI*

US officials visit SL amid growing focus on Indian Ocean

COLOMBO, 22 JUNE

Two senior US officials, including Pacific Air Forces Commander General Kevin Schneider, arrived in Sri Lanka for separate visits centred on defence, security, and economic cooperation, amid increased US engagement in the Indian Ocean. Schneider's three-day visit ends on June 24, while Assistant Secretary of State S Paul Kapur's visit also lasts three days. The visits are significant amid regional geopolitical competition involving China's expanding infrastructure and maritime footprint. Schneider will meet Sri Lankan officials to discuss cooperation in air and maritime security. —*PTI*

2 arrested after Philippines school shooting kills three

MANILA, 22 JUNE

Two students, aged 14 and 15, opened fire at San Jose National High School in Tacloban, central Philippines, killing three pupils and wounding seven others. The suspects, armed with pistols, were arrested. They claimed they were bullied. The school, with over 1,500 students, had only one guard at multiple entrances, enabling the guns to be brought in. The suspects entered two classrooms; most victims were female students. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr ordered a full investigation and increased security. —*PTI*

13 dead, 66 hurt as blast rocks Qatar gas plant

DUBAI, 22 JUNE

An explosion tore through Qatar's key natural gas export terminal Sunday night as workers tried to resume operations there after Iran bombed it during the war, causing a fire that hurt at least 66 people and over 13 dead.

The blast at the Ras Laffan industrial area could cause further chaos in global energy markets, particularly as Qatar remains one of the world's top natural gas producers. Qatar shut down its production after Iran's chokehold on the Strait of Hormuz meant it couldn't get shipments out to its clients.

With Iran loosening its grip on the strait as negotiations continue over a permanent end to the war, Qatar began work to try to restart its export terminal. On Sunday night, that work sparked an explosion and fire at the Barzan gas supply facility, the state-run firm QatarEnergy said.

The Barzan plant had a capacity of almost 1.4 billion standard cubic feet of sales gas per day. Qatar owns nearly all of the plant, with a small share also held by ExxonMobil. The oil company did not immediately respond to a request for comment. —*PTI*

RUSSIAN DRONE STRIKE IN UKRAINE KILLS 3

KYIV, 22 JUNE

A Russian drone strike on Sumy in northeastern Ukraine killed three members of the same family, including a 13-year-old boy and his father, and wounded two others, a regional official said Monday. Russia has been targeting civilian areas with drones and missiles since its invasion over four years ago, with the UN reporting over 16,000 civilian deaths. The attack hit a home, killing a 36-year-old man, his son, and a 73-year-old woman, the mother of his partner, Oleh Hryhorov said.

The man's partner and 10-year-old son were wounded. UN data shows civilian casualties rose sharply recently, with 274 killed and 1,763 injured in May—most in cities away from front lines. —*PTI*

A NARROW VICTORY

Trump-backed Right-winger wins Colombia presidency

BOGOTA, 22 JUNE

Right-wing candidate **Abelardo de la Espriella** has narrowly won Colombia's presidential election, according to an initial vote count, signalling a sharp shift in the country's approach to armed conflict, crime and drug trafficking.

With more than 99 per cent of votes counted, de la Espriella secured 49.7 per cent of the vote against 48.7 per cent for left-wing rival Iván Cepeda, an ally of President Gustavo Petro.

Backed by US President Donald Trump, de la Espriella campaigned on a military crackdown on illegal armed groups and vowed to build a "safe and prosperous Colombia". Addressing supporters in the coastal city of Barranquilla, he promised to govern for all Colombians and uphold the 1991 Constitution.

Cepeda refused to concede, saying the count was not yet official, while Petro demanded an audit of voting software, alleging irregularities without providing evidence.

The razor-thin margin has heightened fears of unrest. Clashes were reported in Cali, where protesters burned US flags and police used tear gas to disperse crowds.

A lawyer and businessman with no political experience, de la Espriella has drawn comparisons with El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele for his tough security stance. —*Agencies*

Rupee closes 34P lower at 94.67 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 22 JUNE

The rupee fell 34 paise to close at 94.67 (provisional) against the US dollar, weighed down by a strong American currency. Forex traders reported volatility as steady debt and deposit inflows supported the rupee, while uncertainty over the Middle East peace deal and a firm dollar pulled it down. The rupee opened at 94.42, declined by nine paise, and traded between 94.24 and 94.76. The dollar index was at 100.88, up 0.03 per cent, amid hawkish Fed signals and US-Iran tensions. Brent crude dropped 1.75 per cent to USD 79.16. Indian stocks rose, with Sensex up 291.17 points and Nifty up 89.80 points. Foreign investors bought Rs 4,859.07 crore. *—PTI*

Gold and silver rebound as rupee weakens

NEW DELHI, 22 JUNE

Precious metals recovered in the capital on Monday, with gold rising Rs 1,700 to Rs 1.52 lakh per 10 grams, and silver jumping Rs 4,800 to Rs 2,45,500 per kilogram, driven by global market gains and a depreciating rupee. The All India Sarafa Association noted that gold ended its four-day decline at Rs 1,52,300, up Rs 1,700 from Friday's Rs 1,50,600. Silver, which previously settled at Rs 2,40,700, rose to Rs 4,800. Traders pointed to weakening rupee and stronger overseas markets for the revival. Internationally, spot gold increased USD 49.93 (1.2 per cent) to USD 4,210.19 per ounce, while silver rose 2.4 per cent to USD 66.47. *—PTI*

Netflix, A24 also pass on Sam Altman biopic

LOS ANGELES, 22 JUNE

After Amazon MGM Studios abruptly walked away from Luca Guadagnino's "Artificial" despite developing it, Netflix, A24 and Focus Features have also passed on the project. Warner Bros' and Clockwork have also stepped away. According to Variety, the hotly anticipated movie, which has been described in film circles as 'The Social Network' for the AI era, is being shopped around. There is hope, however, as MUBI or Neon are both circling the project. The film features Andrew Garfield as the OpenAI chief executive Sam Altman. It is rumoured to be portraying Altman as a pathological liar. Amazon MGM recently announced a USD 50 billion investment in OpenAI. The studio denied that the subject matter drove their decision to part ways. *—PTI*

Aurobindo Pharma gets nod for $250M Lannett acquisition

NEW DELHI, 22 JUNE

Aurobindo Pharma announced that its subsidiary, Aurobindo Pharma USA, Inc, has received approval from the US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) for its USD 250 million acquisition of Lannett Company LLC. The deal, valued at USD 250 million on a cash-free, debt-free basis including normalised working capital, is expected to close before the end of June. Lannett, based in Pennsylvania, specialises in complex, non-opioid controlled substances. The acquisition will expand Aurobindo's product portfolio and add a US manufacturing facility. Aurobindo CEO Swami S Iyer said, "This acquisition accelerates revenue growth, enhances manufacturing capabilities, and strengthens our position in complex generics." Lannett's Indiana plant can produce approximately 4 billion doses annually *—PTI*

Reliance shares move 1 pc higher as Jio files IPO

To be India's largest IPO with fresh issue of 27 cr shares

NEW DELHI, 22 JUNE

Shares of Reliance Industries ended over one per cent higher on Monday after its digital services arm Jio Platforms filed draft papers for what could become India's largest-ever initial public offering.

The positive trend in the stock also came after billionaire Mukesh Ambani unveiled a roadmap for the company's next phase of growth spanning artificial intelligence, satellite broadband, clean energy and consumer businesses at the company's 49th annual general meeting on Friday.

The bellwether stock settled at Rs 1,326.55, up 1.31 per cent, on the BSE. During the day, it rallied 2.75 per cent to Rs 1,345.45.

At the NSE, the stock ended unchanged at Rs 1,309.50. Shares of the firm edged higher by 2.70 per cent to Rs 1,344.90 in intraday trade. The company's market valuation surged by Rs 23,275.96 crore to Rs 17,95,158.92 crore on the BSE.

The rally in the blue-chip stock was also instrumental in driving the markets higher. The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 291.17 points, or 0.38 per cent, to end at 77,094.07. The 50-share NSE Nifty went up by 89.80 points, or 0.37 per cent, to 24,102.90. Jio Platforms, the telecom-to-technology company that transformed India's digital landscape over the past decade, filed a draft red herring prospectus with market regulator SEBI on Friday for a fresh issue of up to 27 crore shares.

Sources familiar with the matter had said that the IPO could raise about Rs 37,700 crore (USD 4 billion), valuing the company at around USD 137 billion.

The public offer aims to unlock value from Jio Platforms, whose telecom arm has quickly become the world's second-largest mobile operator by subscribers in a single country after China Mobile. *—PTI*

BROKERAGES PEG VALUATION AT UP TO $128 BILLION

Expected IPO size: ₹37,700cr ($4 billion), valuing the company at around $137 billion.

Market Valuation: Surged by ₹23,275.96 crore to a total of ₹17,95,158.92 crore on the BSE.

Reliance NSE Stock: Ended unchanged at ₹1,309.50

Reliance BSE Stock: Settled at ₹1,326.55 (up 1.31%)

Partner / Shareholder	Stake (%)	Value in Rupee (INR)
Reliance Industries (Promoter)	66.43%	₹7.64L cr - ₹10L cr
Meat Platforms (Jaadhu Holdings)	9.98%	₹1.15L cr - ₹1.50L cr
Google International LLC	7.73%	₹89,000cr - ₹1.16L cr
KKR	2.31%	₹26,500cr - ₹34,600 cr
Public Investment Fund (PIF)	2.31%	₹26,500cr - ₹34,600 cr
Vista Equity Partners	2.31%	₹26,500cr - ₹34,600 cr
Mubadala Investment Company	1.85%	₹21,300cr - ₹27,700 cr
General Atlantic	1.34%	₹15,400cr - ₹20,100 cr

USED FOR RUBBER, TYRE

Chemicals from US, China, EU hit with anti-dumping duty

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

India has imposed an anti-dumping duty ranging between USD 75 and USD 1,748 per tonne on imports from China, the European Union, and the US of Sulphenamide Accelerators, which are chemicals used in the rubber and tyre industry

An anti-dumping duty is a tariff imposed by a government to protect domestic businesses from foreign competitors selling products below fair market value.

According to a notification from the finance ministry on Friday, the duty was imposed following a recommendation by the commerce ministry's arm, the Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR).

"The anti-dumping duty imposed under this notification shall be levied for a period of five years (unless revoked, superseded or amended earlier)," the notification stated.

The DGTR has recommended the duty on the imports of 'Sulphenamides Accelerators' from the three regions, as it has been exported at a price below the normal value in Indian markets, which has resulted in dumping and material injury to the domestic industry here.

India has also extended the levy of anti-dumping duty on aluminium foil imported from China, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia. The duty will be in force till 15 December this year, the Department of Revenue said in a separate notification.

In another notification, the department said that India has imposed a USD 200.66 per tonne anti-dumping duty on 'Polyethene Terephthalate resin, having an intrinsic viscosity of 0.72 decilitres per gram or higher, from China for five years.

As a countermeasure, such duties are imposed under the multilateral framework of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). They aim to ensure fair trading practices and create a level playing field for domestic producers against foreign competitors. *—PTI*

Positive global cues see markets rebound

MUMBAI, 22 JUNE

Markets rebounded on Monday, Sensex rose 291 points, as falling crude prices and positive global cues buoyed sentiment.

BSE Sensex climbed 291.17 points (+0.38 per cent) to settle at 77,094.07. During the day, it jumped 522.66 points (+0.68 per cent) to 77,325.56. NSE Nifty surged 89.80 points (+0.37 per cent) to end at 24,102.90.

Analysts attributed the recovery to buying in blue-chip stocks, particularly Reliance and HDFC Bank, alongside net foreign institutional investor (FII) inflows of Rs 4,859.07 crore on Friday.

Oil prices fell as talks progressed over a permanent end to the Iran war. Brent crude, the international standard, was trading 1.6 per cent lower to USD 79.30 per barrel. It was at roughly USD 70 per barrel before the start of the war in late February.

"However, concerns around the slow progress of the monsoon could potentially impacting sentiment," noted Vinod Nair at Geojit Investments

On Friday, Sensex dropped 607.08 points (-0.78 per cent) to settle 76,802.90. Nifty declined 154.90 points (-0.64 per cent) to end at 24,013.10. *—PTI*

'India's water governance poses fiscal risks'

MUMBAI, 22 JUNE

India's water management system faces significant challenges, according to Moody's Ratings *–PTI*

India's fragmented water governance, heavily subsidised pricing, and slow reallocation of water across sectors could lead to shortages and sustained fiscal pressure, Moody's Ratings said on Monday.

In a report, Moody's said allocation frameworks, which govern how water supply is prioritised, priced and distributed across households, industry and agriculture, are important determinants of economic resilience in water-stressed systems as they influence how shortages are absorbed and how quickly supply stress translates into fiscal pressure.

It also said that rapidly growing demand from data centres, driven by the expansion of cloud computing and artificial intelligence, is adding a further source of water-intensive industrial pressure that governments and utilities will increasingly need to accommodate.

Water governance in India is dispersed across more than 28 states. Water management and policies are largely controlled by individual state governments.

"Pricing is highly subsidised (especially for agriculture, which consumes about 80 per cent of the country's freshwater), reallocation among sectors is slow and many regions lack the resources to invest in necessary infrastructure," Moody's said.

"Such frameworks can result in more prolonged shortages, higher costs and greater industrial and public service disruptions. The result is a higher risk of sustained fiscal pressure, delayed adjustment and persistent credit strain," Moody's said.

Quoting findings from the World Resources Institute report, Moody's said India has high credit exposure to heat stress, flooding and monsoon variability, while its water management category has very high credit exposure, driven by ageing water infrastructure and excessive groundwater depletion. *—PTI*

Satellite firms face security checks, rollout curbs under DoT draft rules

NEW DELHI, 22 JUNE

The central government has proposed layers of security approvals and conditional consumer services for satellite communication companies, making a licence from the Department of Telecom (DoT) insufficient on its own to launch operations.

According to the draft Telecommunications Rules, 2026, published by the DoT on 17 June, companies like Starlink, Eutelsat OneWeb, and Jio Satcom must secure explicit permission from the Centre before starting satellite phone and broadband services for the public.

They also require security clearance to obtain a letter of intent, which the government issues before a company secures a formal licence. The operators must then still wait for final spectrum allocation to officially start their services.

The companies will receive radio waves through an administrative process against a fixed annual fee in the range of Rs 30,000 to Rs 50 lakh, depending on the service type.

Furthermore, the rule bars satcom companies from connecting their network with public telecommunication networks without permission of the government.

This restriction applies to traditional landline connections, public switched telephone networks, public land mobile networks, global mobile personal communication by satellite, and standard internet networks.

The DoT has alloted a 30 day time period for interested parties to comment on the draft rules before finalizing the framework. *— ANI*

ArcelorMittal partners with AWS

NEW DELHI, 22 JUNE

ArcelorMittal announced a partnership with Amazon Web Services (AWS) to automate its global operations using AWS's cloud and AI. The collaboration aims to optimise safety, asset reliability, and energy efficiency in the manufacturing processes.

The company will unify its operational and information technology on AWS infrastructure, extending cloud and AI to production environments. Using AWS services, ArcelorMittal will deploy AI for predictive maintenance, quality control, process optimisation, and digital twins.

Nik Puri, ArcelorMittal Group CIO & CISO, stated that the company is in the process of "moving to digitally enabled operations – safer for our people, more reliable in output, and more sustainable by design." *—PTI*

SEBI loosens norms for commodity derivatives

MUMBAI, 22 JUNE

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has clarified benefits under the early pay-in mechanism in the commodity derivatives segment, allowing greater flexibility for clearing corporations when exempting margins for positions backed by certified goods stored in accredited warehouses.

A circular issued on 19 June revises provisions under its master circular governing the segment, stating that clearing corporations will continue to offer early pay-in facilities for depositing certified goods against derivatives contracts.

It notes that for positions with early pay-in, clearing corporations may, based on risk assessment, exempt all margin types but will still collect mark-to-market margins from market participants.

The revision follows stakeholder feedback and discussions within the Working Group and Commodity Derivatives Advisory Committee.

The circular takes effect from 21 September, with stock exchanges and clearing corporations instructed to implement system changes and inform members. *—ANI*

'Petrol, diesel margins surpass pre-conflict levels'

NEW DELHI, 22 JUNE

Profitability at state-run oil marketing companies (OMCs) is expected to improve as falling crude oil prices boost fuel marketing margins, although rising debt and uncertain fuel tax policies could limit long-term earnings, says a JP Morgan report.

Composite margins on petrol and diesel at these firms are now above pre-West Asia conflict levels, driven by lower excise duties and crude prices.

The West Asia conflict initially caused a surge in global oil prices, but retail pump rates in India remained steady for much of the period, rising only slightly. Even after a Rs 7.50 per litre price hike in May, retail rates were still below cost. JP Morgan estimates that OMCs' petrol and diesel margins are now higher than before the war, though LPG losses remain high.

Earnings in April-June may be impacted by inventory losses, but second quarter profits should improve. However, debt levels have increased, and the government could restore duties, which might affect margins. BPCL and IOC are poised to benefit most if oil prices stay low. *—PTI*

BACKS IBM CEO

Not chasing AI investment bubble: Zoho Chief

NEW DELHI, 22 JUNE

Zoho Corporation Founder and Chief Scientist Sridhar Vembu *–AI*

Zoho Corporation Founder and Chief Scientist Sridhar Vembu on Monday took to X to share his take on the AI data centre bubble debate, as he gave reference to IBM CEO Arvind Krishna reportedly questioning whether the infrastructure build-out economics in tech industry justifies the spending spree.

In a post on X, Vembu talked of Zoho adopting a more measured approach and highlighted that the company will not chase investment bubbles. "IBM CEO Arvind Krishna says the multi-trillion dollar AI data centre build-out is a bubble. We are investing in creating capabilities like data curation, reinforcement learning, and most crucially the compiler infrastructure to ensure AI output can be verified but we will not chase the investment bubble," Vembu said.

Vembu dubbed this "normal prudence".

"To some people that would sound defeatist, but we will talk in 5 years," Vembu said.

The comments come at a time when global tech giants -- from OpenAI to Microsoft and Google to Meta -- are committing hundreds of billions of dollars toward specialised chips and massive data centers to power generative AI models, leading to growing unease among some experts about the eventual return on investment for such unprecedented spending.

Krishna has reportedly expressed skepticism around the massive costs of the AI infrastructure race, and warned that tech companies could struggle to get a return on the massive capital spent being committed towards building data centers for artificial intelligence. *—PTI*

Salah scores, Egypt downs NZ 3-1 for first victory

He scored his 68th international goal in the 67th minute

VANCOUVER, 22 JUNE

Egypt's players danced on the field while their red-clad fans celebrated in the stands. The Pharaohs finally got their first World Cup win.

Mohamed Salah scored the go-ahead goal and Egypt went on to defeat New Zealand 3-1 on Sunday night.

He celebrated his 68th international goal by pumping his fist before he was mobbed by his teammates in the 67th minute. When he was subbed off in the 85th he was treated to a standing ovation by the crowd at BC Place Vancouver.

Egypt moved to the top of the standings in Group G with the win, but was not yet assured of a spot in the knockout round.

The Pharaohs will play a deciding game against Iran on Friday in Seattle, needing at least a draw to advance.

Egypt is making its fourth World Cup appearance after missing the field in Qatar four years ago.

Finn Surman put New Zealand ahead in the 15th minute with a flying header off a corner kick delivered by Instagram sensation Tim Payne. It was the third international goal for the 6-foot-3 defender who plays for the Portland Timbers in MLS.

Omar Marmoush dropped a free kick off to Salah in the 35th minute but it went wide and bent into the side netting and Egypt went into the half down 1-0.

Egypt turned up the pressure coming out of the half and Mostafa Zico broke through with the equaliser, finding space between Surman and Payne for a header that goalkeeper Max Crocombe got a hand on but couldn't stop in the 58th minute.

Salah took a back-heel pass from Zico for his goal, which puts him just one away from tying his coach for the national team's all-time scoring lead. Trezeguet's diving header wrapped up scoring for Egypt in the 82nd. — *AP*

Iran holds 10-man Belgium to 0-0 draw

INGLEWOOD, 22 JUNE

Alireza Beiranvand made seven saves while Iran and Belgium played to a 0-0 draw at the World Cup on Sunday, with Team Melli unable to break through after the Red Devils went down to 10 men in the second half.

Belgium defender Nathan Ngoy received a straight red card in the 66th minute when he miskicked a ball backward and then fouled Mehdi Taremi to prevent the Iran star from getting a clean breakaway scoring chance.

Iran couldn't capitalise, and Belgium actually generated better scoring chances down the stretch, but both teams left with their second straight draw in group play.

Neither team will feel good about the result at SoFi Stadium.

During a tumultuous World Cup trip affected by travel restrictions and visa denials from the US, Iran will regret missing a golden opportunity to beat a European powerhouse sitting 10th in FIFA's world rankings.

Iran returned to the Los Angeles area for its second straight match in front of a crowd packed with fans from the diaspora both supporting Team Melli and decrying the Iranian government with boos of the anthem.

Belgium dominated possession in the first 60 minutes, but Iran had a handful of strong chances stopped by goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois, who matched Beiranvand's excellence. Team Melli had the best scoring chances early, including a beautiful set piece for a goal by Taremi, who was ruled offside by video review.

Maxim De Cuyper was denied twice in the second half by Beiranvand, including a golden opportunity in the 86th minute.

With so many preparation obstacles, Ghalenoei leaned on experience against Belgium, sending out the oldest starting 11 at a World Cup match since 1966, according to Opta.

Romelu Lukaku was a surprise addition to Belgium's starting lineup, playing the first 73 minutes and recording one shot. — *AP*

Iran field oldest XI since 1966

Iran made history by fielding the oldest starting XI since 1966, averaging 32 years and 181 days in their draw with Belgium. Despite facing heavy pressure, the veteran Iranian side held firm and frustrated the Belgians throughout their WC clash.

Iran leaves thank you note in LA

Iran's football team left a handwritten thank-you note in the SoFi Stadium dressing room after a goalless World Cup draw with Belgium in Los Angeles, thanking the city for its hospitality and saying they were leaving "with dignity". This came despite the team's frustration over US travel restrictions that have forced the squad to commute from its base in Tijuana, Mexico, for matches.

Uruguay struggles in first 2 matches without Suarez

MIAMI GARDENS, 22 JUNE

Uruguay's World Cup campaign has begun in disappointing fashion. After draws against Saudi Arabia and Cape Verde, and with Spain still to come, the two-time champion is at risk of missing the knockout stage.

Watching from the stands at Miami Stadium was former captain Luis Suárez, who retired from international football in 2024 as Uruguay's all-time leading scorer with 69 goals in 143 appearances. The 39-year-old, now with Inter Miami, had offered to come out of retirement for the World Cup but was left out by coach Marcelo Bielsa, who also excluded veteran striker Edinson Cavani.

Bielsa admitted Uruguay "lacked a finishing touch" after Sunday's draw with Cape Verde. "I think that the problem or greatest issue is that we started the second half with the ball and with the victory," Bielsa said. "We didn't close it. We didn't make any danger."

Fans acknowledged Suárez's absence. "He's old and now it's time for the younger players. But he's a good player, maybe the best player I've ever watched with Uruguay," supporter Frederico Suárez said.

In Uruguay's first World Cup without Suárez since 2010, Darwin Núñez and Federico Viñas struggled in attack. Midfielder Agustín Canobbio scored against Cape Verde but also missed a late chance that could have secured victory. Suárez and Bielsa clashed after the 2024 Copa América over the coach's leadership. Uruguay now faces mounting pressure to beat Spain on Friday to keep its World Cup hopes alive. —*PTI*

Cape Verde holds Uruguay to 2-2 draw

The tiny island of Cape Verde that stunned Spain last week —*ANI*

MIAMI GARDENS, 22 JUNE

Cape Verde's magical start to its first World Cup isn't over. It might just be getting started.

The tiny island that stunned tournament favourite Spain last week did it again against Uruguay, a two-time World Cup champion, on Sunday, coming from behind for a 2-2 draw.

Kevin Pina scored on a free kick for Cape Verde's first-ever goal in the World Cup, and Helio Varela scored the equaliser for what has become one of the most surprising teams of the expanded 48-team tournament.

Cape Verde, which has two points in Group H along with Uruguay, face Saudi Arabia in its final group match.

The islands off Africa's West coast have about 4,000 square metres of land and half a million inhabitants, making Cape Verde the third-smallest nation to qualify for the World Cup.

Cape Verdean fans who watched their squad pull off one of the stunners of the tournament last week by holding Spain to a scoreless draw continued their celebrations when Pina blasted a strike past diving Uruguay goalie Fernando Muslera for a 1-0 lead in the 21st.

Maxi Araújo and Agustin Canobbio scored late first-half goals to put Uruguay ahead. But Varela took advantage of a bad pass by Mathias Olivera and caught Muslera way off his line for a tying empty-net goal and his first international score.

Varela celebrated as Muslera and other Uruguay players dropped their heads in disappointment.

"The result, I think, was quite deserved," Uruguay coach Marcelo Bielsa said afterward through an interpreter. — *PTI*

Three Indian-origin golfers finish top-20 at US Open

SOUTHAMPTON, 22 JUNE

Sahith Theegala produced his best-ever finish at the US Open as three golfers of Indian origin ended inside the top-20 at Shinnecock Hills. Wyndham Clark held off a relentless final-round challenge to capture his second US Open title. Theegala, and Akshay Bhatia had a memorable week.

Theegala finished tied-11th at two-over-par after a closing 73, while Bhatia capped another impressive major performance with a final-round 70 to finish tied-17th. Aaron Rai, the reigning PGA Championship winner, shared the 11th place, rallying after a slow start to the week.

At the top, Clark completed a remarkable wire-to-wire victory despite seeing his six-shot overnight lead shrink to a single stroke early in the final round. —*PTI*

ICC launches post-pregnancy guidelines for female players

DUBAI, 22 JUNE

The ICC has introduced new guidelines to support women cricketers returning to the sport after pregnancy, focusing on early recovery, structured training, and conditioning over a 16-week period.

The 'Return to Play Post-Pregnancy Guidelines' follow a six 'R's framework: Ready, Review, Restore, Recondition, Return, and Refine. The ICC states the approach includes early recovery, medical and wellbeing reviews, gradual reintroduction of structured training, cricket-specific conditioning, and ongoing monitoring once players return to competition.

A dedicated 'Case Manager', who may be a doctor or physiotherapist, will oversee each player's progress. The initial review will offer psychological support, followed by graded strength training. After eight weeks, players will return to running in collaboration with medical professionals. Before clearance to return, symptoms such as musculoskeletal or pelvic floor issues will be thoroughly monitored. ICC Chairman Jay Shah said, "No player should have to choose between motherhood and representing her country.

The ICC's Return to Play Post-Pregnancy Guidelines are an important step in creating a more supportive and informed environment across the game." The guidelines align with local legislation, including India's six-month paid maternity leave. Led by Dr Philippa Inge, the ICC Medical Advisory Committee recommends flexible training, facility access, childcare advice, suitable spaces at venues, and travel support.

Afy Fletcher of the West Indies, playing at the ICC T20 World Cup after giving birth in 2021, believes the guidelines will enable more players to return to cricket post-pregnancy. She said, "It gives you a chance to have your family and then return, so I think that's one of the best things they could have done for women's cricket." Fletcher added, "Every moment I play is driven by my son, and you have to trust the process." —*PTI*

- The 'Return to Play Post-Pregnancy Guidelines' follow a six 'R's framework: Ready, Review, Restore, Recondition, Return, and Refine. This includes medical and wellbeing reviews

ADITI FINISHES T-24 AT MEIJER LPGA, MIYU YAMASHITA WINS PLAY-OFF

BELMONT, 22 JUNE

Aditi Ashok finished T-24 at the Meijer LPGA Classic following a final round of one-under 71 here. The Indian finished the week with a score eight-under par with rounds of 69-69-71-71. Miyu Yamashita, a former major winner, won the title after beating Lottie Woad in a play-off. Miyu and Lottie both were at 17-under par after 72 holes before Miyu birdied the first play-off hole to take the title.

Aditi had a strong start to the week as she opened with consecutive rounds of 3-under 69. Heading into the weekend she looked primed to register her second top 10 result of the season. However, over the weekend Aditi was only able to register rounds of 1-under 71 on both Saturday and Sunday.

She began her final round with an early bogey on the third hole before making two straight birdies on the fourth and fifth holes to be under par before the turn of the round. On the back nine, she dropped a shot on the 10th hole before making a birdie on the 14th and closed off the day at 1-under 71. —*PTI*

Pritam wins Jr 10m air rifle, India bags women's bronze

SUHL, 22 JUNE

Teenager Pritam Kendre clinched gold in the men's 10m air rifle at the ISSF Junior World Championship, boosting India's medal tally to 11, including five golds. The 16-year-old, competing in only his second international event after completing Class 10 exams, scored 251.3 in the final, finishing ahead of neutral athlete Timofei Aleinikov and Norway's Jens Oestli.

Pritam said, "I want to continue improving and win more medals for India." He credited Gagan Narang's Gun For Glory Shooting Academy for his progress. India also earned a bronze in the women's 25m pistol team event with Anjali Bhagwat, Parisha Gupta, and Nithila Christopher scoring 1713 (43x). Anjali qualified seventh in the individual final but was eliminated in sixth after a shoot-off. The championships run until 26 June with over 800 shooters competing. —*PTI*